MY SOUTH SEA SWEETHEART

BEATRICE GRIMSHAW

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MY SOUTH SEA SWEETHEART

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MY SOUTH SEA SWEETHEART

BY

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Author of "The Terrible Island"

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MY SOUTH SEA SWEETHEART

CHAPTER I

"MARRIAGES," said my father, "would on the whole be quite as successful as they are if they were arranged by the Lord Chancellor without reference to the will of the parties."

"That's not your own," said old Ivory, throwing a piece of driftwood on the fire. The log, sea-salted, snapped into flames of vivid green and blue.

"Of course not," replied my father. "I don't even remember who said it. But it's true."

"It may be," said old Ivory caustically, "but if the Lord Chancellor only managed to be 'quite as successful' as existing arrangements are, I wouldn't give much for his chance of a long life."

"Perhaps you and I are a trifle prejudiced," offered my father. The smoke rose up in a steady stream to the dark roof of the cave. There was an opening there, invisible by day.

"We've had some cause. . . . Son and grandson in my case; your father's and your — well, well! — for you."

I saw he had bitten off what he was going to say. I knew what it was, of course. Mother and father hadn't got on. Mother was dead in the dark ages, before I remembered. Father and I and Lorraine my aunt had come to Hiliwa Dara Island with old Mr. Ivory and his great-grandson, Luke. I didn't know when, and didn't know why. They

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owned the island among them. Nobody else lived there but a score or two of native laborers whom we had brought with us. Nobody ever came. Once or twice a year our cutter went away, and came back again with goods from another island. There were many other islands in the world; there was one, very, very big, that was called Australia, whence I had come, I did not know when or how. I could not remember it. I could not remember anything but what I knew — the island and my father and aunt, old Ivory and his boy, the laborers, the gardens, the great cave house where we lived. These were my world ringed round by the pathless sea.

" Luke's parents' marriage had its good points," said my father consideringly.

Luke, at this, raised his head from the arrow he was shaping by the firelight. (We always used a driftwood fire by night, since the main hall of the cave was never warm.) I saw his blue eyes glitter under their heavily carved brow arches. Boy though he was, he had a masculine face, in nothing at all like the small, pointed countenance, with the dark eyes and delicate forehead, that met me every morning in my glass.

" Certainly Mark was fond of the boy's mother," said the old, old man in the corner of the cave. " She spent his fortune — and more. But we won't discuss her before the boy."

Luke looked up again, and then down at his work once more. His lips were set rather tightly. I thought he had been near speaking, but he uttered no word. In the pause that followed, the sea, a long way outside, talked on the coral beach; a puff of wind, blown down the entrance tunnel, set the driftwood to leaping and blazing.

Lorraine, her hands round her knees, sat staring at

the light. Her eyes, green as the flames, her hair, black as charred ashes, seemed to relate her in some strange way to those wild fires of our far-off island. I could not have put the thought into words then. I can now. Child as I was, I knew her to be the flame under ashes. I had the wisdom that those older than I had not.

It was she who spoke next. I was sitting with my bare, sunburned legs stretched out under my blue tunic, staring at her, and wondering if she was not very, very old. She must be very aged, I thought — thirty at the least. Or maybe sixty. Perhaps it was her black clothing made her look old. My father and Ivory wore light khaki clothes, Luke and I had blue tunics very much alike, but Lorraine went always dressed in loose, thin robes of black. No one, I knew, had seen her in any other color, since the wedding day that had left her a widow before she was a wife, in the world I had never seen, long ago.

She said, looking at the green of the fire:

"I grant you that most marriages are unhappy, love matches as often as the rest. But the happy marriage is a Paradise that's worth taking any risk for. Any risk!" Her voice died down, as the flames were dying. The wind that whipped them into life had blown itself away.

Old Ivory settled himself more comfortably on the wrack-filled cushion of his seat.

"It's just that looking for Paradise that does the mischief," he said. "I'm too old to deny that you see the Paradise business once in a way — oh, in a very long way indeed! But it's a million to one sort of chance at the best. As for it's being worth any risk, that's poppycock. And the usual love match isn't a risk at all, it's a practical certainty —

of the wrong kind. Marriage is the great danger of life. Nature has to make us drunk to drive us into it. When I think of all the fine men I've seen spoiled —" He looked at his great-grandson. I thought he checked a sigh.

"And all the fine women made miserable by brutes," added father. His eyes were on me as he spoke.

"How typical you are of your ages!" commented Lorraine. "Mr. Ivory all for the man, as they used to be; Arthur more for the women, as people are now."

"What are you for, Lorraine?" I asked curiously.

"The children," she said, with more sadness in her tone than I could believe altogether natural — there is such a temptation in having a golden voice! "We three are wrecks of one sort and another, but you two are boats still in harbor. You'll have to face the gales some day."

For it was understood that I, and Luke, were going to school — going to see the world — in a very few years.

"I shall just love to face the gales," I said.

"They won't be wanting," answered Lorraine.

"Now what do you mean by that?" asked father, alert to any tone of disparagement directed towards me.

For answer, my aunt took my small face in her hands, and silently turned it up to father's view. I do not know what he saw in it, to make him look so long. A strange light dawned in his eyes.

"Yes, Lorraine," he said, as she released me. "You're right; she is." And he drew a long, long sigh.

"Well," he said presently, "so much the wiser I think myself."

"*I* think," spoke Lorraine, "that there's never any use in trying to play chess with Fate."

"Poppycock!" exploded old Ivory again.

It was clear to me by this time — and I think to Luke also, though he did not look from his arrow — that our elders were talking secrets of some kind. Curiosity began to burn me. But, with the cunning of childhood, I kept all expression out of my face, in the hope of hearing more.

"Luke," spoke old Ivory from his throne, "go to bed."

The boy rose instantly, and put his knife and his arrow on a shelf.

"Good night, Miss Hamilton," he said. "Good night, Dara. Good night, grandfather. Good night, Mr. Hamilton."

He walked off down the dark corridor at the far end of the cave without a backward glance.

"Hamilton," said old Ivory, "you spoil her."

"Ivory," countered father, in his pleasant voice — I have never heard sweeter tones than father's and Lorraine's —"you're too hard with him, sometimes."

"If I am, it's in your interests. Yours. I wish you considered mine as carefully."

"I don't think they're neglected. And there's five years or so to look round in, at the very least."

"Luke's like our family," observed Ivory, with what appeared to be an abrupt change of subject. "A mighty good fourteen. Mark was ready for college at sixteen, I remember, if they would have taken him so early. I was preaching at eighteen. As for Matthew — my son — he was precocious enough in other ways. He'd raise the devil in the

village, before he was seventeen, with — well, I hope Luke won't follow the rule of a skip-a-generation. Rather skip two, and model after me. But he's an Ivory, all right. We start soon, and keep going along, if you don't kill us."

I could not make anything interesting out of all this, but so convinced was I that there was something interesting in it, if one could only track it out, that I feigned sleep, and lay with my face buried in my long hair, on the comfortable fire-warmed sand beside my father. I knew he liked to have me thus sleeping near him, and I hoped to gain an unobserved half hour.

But I had reckoned without Lorraine.

" Get up," she said, in a low, penetrating whisper; " don't sham, or I'll tell your father."

At this (though I could cheerfully have slapped her) I thought fit to awake by slow degrees, stretch, yawn, and rise to my feet. I knew she would carry out her threat if I persisted, and my father was not to be trifled with, on any question of lying or trickery.

So I bade them good night in proper order — father first, then Lorraine, then old Mr. Ivory — and went off to my room, leaving them sitting there round the great driftwood fire, with the smoke springing up into the dark arch of the roof, and the sea sounding on outside.

When I look back, across the seas and the years, to those island days, I think always of the long sound of waves, the fresh, weedy smell of sands at low water, the silver shining of a full tide after rain. I can see, on a still afternoon, the oyster gray of the sky meet the oyster gray of the sea, with just so much division as might mark the hinge of a giant

shell. I can see, on northwest mornings, the wide lagoon lie smooth and green as emerald, silver-set in the ring of white tumbling surf that barred it away from the blue thunderous seas outside. . . . Sea, always sea — the sounds, the sights, the scents of the great South Seas — these were my picture books, my library, my school. . . . We had books and pictures of the common kind in plenty, and I got plenty of schooling, too, from my father and Lorraine. But I think it was the sea that taught and made me, most of all.

My room was at the end of a long cave passage, some way from the main hall. It was by no means the damp, rough cell that the nature of our dwelling might have led one to expect. Father and old Ivory, on our coming to the island, had chosen to leave the main hall just as it was, sand-floored, limestone-roofed, with rough arches leading away in all directions, and a low, wide tunnel running out towards the beach and the sea. But the rest of the place was fitted up almost with luxury.

Have you not thought, when you were a boy, and spent long summer holidays wandering through the sea-scented, echoing halls of some little city of caves, how you could, if only you might, make a splendid residence of such a place, given time and labor and the delightful possibility that never, never came about? You never even dared to speak to your elders of such a dream. You knew how they would laugh, and tell you it was impossible. . . .

Well, let me tell you now that it is not. Many men have made such homes, in many parts of the world. Father and old Ivory were not blazing the trail of inventors when they turned the caves of Hiliwa Dara into a house good to look at, and very

fit to live in. They had heard of such things, and seen them, so they knew how to go about it. They made coral concrete by the ton, burning masses of white coral down on the shore into heaps of flour-like lime; mixing it with sand and gravel, puddling it with water. They concreted the floors of the caves meant for living rooms, and the floors of the passageways. They stopped the cracks through which water trickled. They blasted openings to the outer air, and put shutters in them to keep out rains and tempests. They made, in fine, a sound, tight, airy, beautiful house out of the dark and muddy caves of Hiliwa Dara, and they did it in a fourth of the time that would have been needed to build any other kind of house. Our cave ancestors even yet can teach us a thing or two worth learning.

I carried a brand from the fire with me to my room, and lit with it the lamp that hung from the roof — a great " baler " shell, cream-lined, crimson-lipped, filled with cocoanut oil, and floating a wick of cotton. We had kerosene, matches, and most other civilized necessities, in store. But since communication was always uncertain, it was the inviolable rule of Hiliwa Dara to use native material as much as possible. And I do not think more beautiful pure light ever fell from a more beautifully shaped vessel than fell upon my little drift-timber bed, and on the cedar chest that held my clothes, and on the gleaming frieze of pearl shell set about the roof of the room, from the lamp made in the depths of the great sea.

On my mattress of dried sea wrack I slept well. But all through the night, and all through the long sounding of the sea that penetrated even to the depths of my sheltered little chamber, ran through

my dreams the echo of the words I had heard in the great hall: *"There are five years to look round in"*—*"You are right; she is."* And in my dreams, I wondered — What was I that I did not know? After the five years, what should come to me?

CHAPTER II

AS soon as there was light to tell gray sea from gray sand, Luke and I were out upon the beach. We always began the day with a swim, and as we were dressed practically alike, in a loose short smock and knickers of blue linen, there was not much undressing to do. Luke threw off his smock, I kept mine on, and we both changed afterwards.

The routine of the bath was always the same. We ran out of our cave rooms, met in the main hall, and raced together down the slope of clinking coral that led to the lagoon. We shrieked and leaped as we ran, because it was very cold in the gray of the morning, and the night had been hot, and our bodies were aching for the kiss of the green salt sea. There was a shallow space to run through first of all, kicking up the water as we went, and throwing aside great carven shells that a collector would have knelt to save. Then came the deep, with gold chainwork of sunrise already knitting over and over it, and dazzling us as we lifted our heads from the ripples we had made in our lemming-like rush for the full sea. Then the outer coral reef, sharp and spear-pointed, not to be mounted without care. . . . There was always the temptation to stand on its farther edge and look and long for the tumbling white and blue waves outside, where we were forbidden to go. Luke had caught a thrashing or two from old Ivory, and I had been shut up in my cave for a day, more than once, before we had given in

to the hard law. I don't know that we should have done so, even then — for it was so invigorating to breast those huge breakers, and ride, shouting, in a chariot of foam, over the reef into the lagoon — had not an ugly thing frightened me one morning. We were used to the sight of shark fins riving through the deep, and like most Pacific folk, had little fear of them (indeed the shark is not so black as he is painted), but what we saw that day was different. It was just a flash in the sun, a whipping up of something long and black, and very thin — more like a thirty-foot length of rope than anything else, except for the oily glitter. It wasn't an octopus feeler; that is thick. It wasn't the whip-like, dagger-armed tail of a giant stingaree; we knew the look and the lash of that, as well as we knew the look of its brown-marbled fin, big as a dining table, heaving up into sight and sinking again before you had time to take a real look. I do not know what it was — I never did; and no naturalist has been able to tell me. But one of the great gulfs of the Pacific, a chasm five miles deep, lies near the outer reef of Hiliwa Dara Islands, and the devil of the deep seas alone knows what horrors may be hidden there. . . .

I never wanted to swim " outside " again. Luke not only wanted to, but did it, not a minute after we had seen the awful thing, while I stood staggering about in the midst of the foam and thunder of the reef, sick at heart, and crying to him to come back. He did come back, a little pale, but with a wonderful light in his blue eyes.

" Grandfather can lick me if he likes now," was his only remark, shouted through the pounding surf. " I've proved it to myself."

By the freemasonry that lived between us two, I

knew that he meant he had proved his courage. I knew that he had doubted it; I knew that Luke, made as he was, could not have endured that doubt, and endured to live.

Running up to the great hall of the cave house, all wet, with my mermaid hair streaming down, I had shown my courage then by fearlessly bearding the formidable Ivory, and telling him why Luke had, once more, broken his rule. I could not endure my boy mate should suffer punishment for such a noble fault.

Ivory heard me in silence, and then told Lorraine to take me to dry myself. I don't know what he said to Luke. Luke only told me that " grandad was very decent to him." He did not go beyond the reef again. For myself, not all the treasures of all the world poured out at my feet would have tempted me to venture. I might break sensible rules through childish bravado, but I was never the boy-girl type that courts an actual danger. As for Luke's horror of " being afraid "— I saw it, and admired it, but I did not understand it.

In truth, I felt then, as I felt on the morning when we rushed down into the lagoon, that Luke was somehow or other getting away from me. He was changing. How, I did not know. But it seemed to me that Luke and I were — somehow — no longer one. We had been used to speak without thinking, to talk as we breathed, to understand without talking. Now . . .

It came back right in the middle of our swim, as we landed together on a coral " horsehead " to rest after a vigorous bout of the misnamed " crawl." I was examining a grazed elbow with some attention, when I looked up, and saw Luke's eyes fixed on my face.

"Don't look at me like that," I snapped.

"Like what?"

"Don't look at me as if you — as if you saw me!"

"You talk a great deal of nonsense," he said calmly.

"There's more sense in it than in some of your sense," I retorted (more wisely than I knew) and immediately did a sitting dive.

But I had been right. Luke was changed.

That very morning he amazed the household, already collected for prayers in the main hall, by walking in clad only in a bathing towel, and dropping the entire collection of his tunics and knickers at his grandfather's feet.

"What's the meaning of this conduct?" demanded old Ivory, looking, with the Bible in his hand, quite frightfully like an ancient Hebrew lawgiver. I do not mean that there was any Jewish ancestry about the Ivorys. I only mean that old Ivory was amazingly Michael-Angeloesque, in moments of any stress.

"Grandfather," replied Luke, with a courage that turned me cold, "you have dressed me like a girl or a child long enough. I want clothes like yours and Mr. Hamilton's. Proper clothes."

"Do you know how old you are?" demanded the prophet with the Book, in a windy voice.

"Of course. I'm fourteen and two weeks."

"And you want a set of grown-up clothes."

"Yes, sir." There was no "please" attached. I trembled. I thought old Ivory would crush him with the mighty Book.

Ivory put down the Bible without a word, went, still without a word, to my father's room, and returned with a shirt and trousers belonging to him.

" I'll square with you, Hamilton," he said briefly. " Let Lorraine take up the legs of these a bit. Mine are too big altogether."

Lorraine did take up the legs, after prayers. During prayers, Luke, holding firmly on to his point, sat and knelt, draped in the bath towel only. I whispered to him that he was just like the infant Samuel, and had the satisfaction of seeing a vexed flash in his eyes. It was pleasant, I thought, to make him feel. I would try it again in some other way. Making people feel was sport — except with Lorraine.

. . . " Be with us all for evermore. Hamilton! "

" What is it? "

" If Dara had heard, or joined in, a single word of the prayers, I am very much mistaken."

" Is this accusation true? " asked father, pulling me to him, and pinching my ear.

Ivory looked at him, and at me, disapprovingly.

" Train up a child . . ." he said. " I suppose breakfast's ready."

" There's fried flying fish. And honeycake," I said, jumping up and down, and clapping my hands. " I love them both."

" You should never say you ' love ' things," chid Lorraine, sweeping on in her black dress.

" But I do," I said. " I love everything in all the world sometimes. Things to eat, and things to see, and things to feel, things to . . . I wouldn't care to live if I couldn't go on loving."

" Dara, Dara! " said my father, half reproachfully, half sadly. But he did not check me; he never checked my childish running-on.

" When I go to the world," I said, scampering in front of him (we always called the projected exodus

of Luke and of myself "going to the world"— I don't know why) "it will be delightful, for there will be new things to love there."

"True, for you," said my father, somewhat sarcastically. No one else took any notice at all. We were entering the dining hall now, and the smell of the good things on the table seemed to occupy all thoughts. . . .

I must tell about our dining hall. It was the glory of Hiliwa Dara, and would have been the wonder of all that part of the Pacific, had tourists ever come within five miles of it. But no one ever did; and so its beauties were ours and ours alone.

Nowadays, when famous caves are becoming common, and when thousands of people every year go through the Mammoth Caves of Kentucky, the Jenolan Caves of New South Wales, and other show places, one need not fear to be accused of "travelers' tales" if one describes an underground miracle. And a miracle inded was the Hall of Persephone, as my scholarly father had named it. I used to think, in my earliest days, that it was the very palace hall to which Demeter's daughter had been rapt away, in the arms of enamored Pluto. And I thought, too, privately, that Persephone had been a "fuss-cat" for objecting to Pluto or anything else, so long as she had that magnificent home to live in.

It was a hall of diamonds.

I believe, in geology, such things are known as "drusy cavities"— a singularly ugly name for a singularly beautiful thing. I did not know even so much in those days, nor, I think, did my father. We were quite content to be ignorant of the scientific titles rightly owned by Persephone's Hall and its crystals. I called them diamonds, because they were exactly like the small shiny stones in Lor-

raine's half-hoop ring, but even I knew that you didn't have diamonds the size of a dinner plate.

The hall was about forty feet long by twenty to twenty-five in width. You came into it from a long, dark passage, designedly left unlighted, that led you with almost startling suddenness into a blaze of crystalline splendor like nothing else in the heavens above, or the earth beneath, or the waters under the earth. Father and Ivory, with much blasting and digging away, had contrived one immense oblong window, open towards the rising of the sun. Its embrasure must have been full ten feet deep, but it let in a splendor of sun, in the early morning hours, that burned and dazzled upon the thick-set crystal masses lining roof and walls, till one could scarcely bear the glory of it. The drooping chandeliers, set by Nature's hand alone; the glassy curtain that fell like a frozen waterfall down all one end of the hall; the curious tall " candlesticks " beside the window, shone not crystal-white alone, but violet, blue and green and red, in sparks, as the light crept down the walls from the great opening to the sea. Blue and white the waves were racing, out there, with a glory of sun and spray on them that almost matched the glory of the crystal hall within; and the sea wind streamed through the embrasure, strong and salt and vivid on his lips, a very philter of life. . . .

Once I heard old Ivory say to himself, as the wind met him at the mouth, he walking slowly, as his manner was, with his head bent a little towards his breast:

> " I remember, when I think
> That my youth was half divine " . . .

I wondered what he meant. Then it occurred to me that old people, of course, were foolish; they

said things that had no meaning at all. It was well to be of a different species and race — it was well to be young. . . .

This morning I felt and behaved very young indeed — I think, as an unconscious protest against the suddenly acquired age of Luke. I came into Persephone's Hall with a series of frog-like leaps — my latest accomplishment, of which I was inordinately proud — and found my way to my own side of the table, hopping.

" Honeycakes and flying fish! " I sang, taking my seat.

Lorraine told me I was a citizen of Sybaris, and when I shook my head at her, said I had better look it up at lessons. But not even the thought of lessons could spoil that glorious day.

Dinah would have spoiled it, if any one could. She had cooked the breakfast in her kitchen cave, set it out on the concrete table, and was now sitting humbly, as was her habit, at the far end, though father had told her often enough, in my recollection, that she was not considered a servant here on Hiliwa Dara, where all were equal, and that he would just as soon she sat with us.

I saw, the moment I looked at her, that she was in a funeral mood.

Dinah had missed her vocation, if any one ever did. Obviously she should, with her peculiar cast of mind, have been the wife of some flourishing undertaker, to whom she would have been as good as a fortune. As a matter of fact, she had, out " in the world," been married to a commercial traveler of the wine and spirits line, who died of extreme conviviality — and, I think, of Dinah. But that is conjecture.

She was the most ghoulishly minded human being

I have ever met, with an inly rooted attraction towards illnesses, deaths, and funerals. We had had few deaths on Hiliwa Dara, but there had been one or two. A native from among our field laborers had died of consumption; a young brown girl had "gone out" in her confinement; a baby or two had given in to baby ailments. Dinah made the most of all such occurrences; it would be unkind to say that they actually gave her joy, but they certainly did seem in some obscure fashion to liven her and do her good. Her bedroom was hung round with funeral pictures; her father's grave, her mother's grave, a faded funeral wreath in a frame; a ghastly photograph of her husband lying in his coffin, another of his headstone, with herself in widow's weeds beside it. She had newspaper notices of all these events pasted into a book, as actresses paste their photographs of praise. She did not wear widow's weeds herself; it was Lorraine, who never spoke of deaths, who wore eternal black for one dead — but Dinah, although she dressed in the rough blue affected by myself and Luke, contrived to shed an atmosphere of widowhood over the very cookies and pies that she made, and to spread a smell of funeral baked meats about every ham she cured.

To-day, after helping round the excellent results of her cookery, she heaved a deep sigh and remarked, with her head on one side (always a danger signal) that she did not hold with tables made that way. Asked (injudiciously) to explain, she said that a marvel table (concrete was always "marvel" to Dinah) made her think of the tomb. And it seemed unlucky, somehow, to be eating your food off of a grave. Dinah did not read — or at least, so little as hardly to be worth mentioning — but

she certainly used different founts of type in her talk, and her capitals were expressive in a high degree.

Father never did know when to let well alone with Dinah. I think his inborn courtesy often prompted him to unnecessary and injudicious politeness.

"Why so?" he remarked, slicing a honeycake. "I don't see that any bad luck is likely to hit us now, if it hasn't done so in all the years that we have been eating off this concrete table of ours."

"Man proposes, and God decomposes," said Dinah piously. There were tears somewhere in her voice. She filled a cup of coffee, and buried her face in it. Luke suddenly choked in his. He could never get accustomed to Dinah's amazing malapropisms.

"I can't help smelling bad luck, somehow or other. It seems that kind of a day," observed Dinah, looking, unmoved, at the world of sapphire and gold that showed through the great window.

"And Master Luke there" (she would keep up the master and the miss) "sitting with the sermons of the grave about him, as you might say, does give my stomach a turn." Luke, as a fact, was still wrapped in his bath towel like a senator in a toga, or, as Dinah cheerfully put it, like a corpse in its cerements.

Nobody took much notice of her. Dinah was like that sometimes. She may, or may not, have been quite right in her mind. I have often wondered. But she was a splendid worker, and without her efficient aid in household tasks, my education at the hands of Lorraine would have been sadly hampered. So every one indulged her.

"Talking of bad luck is bringing it," said my father, quite seriously. He believed in the fructify-

ing power of thought; it has become a common faith, since those days. . . .

Dinah rolled on unreproved. Her head was on one side; she was buttering a piece of bread in a resigned sort of manner, as if she were sorry for it, and for herself. . . .

"You can't bring bad luck nor keep it away," she said. "You can only make ready for it. Thank God, I always have kept the best of my night-dresses not trespassed upon, folded up with moth-balls inside of it in a box, so that I can face my Maker with a mind at rest. And if ever anything happens to me"— she addressed Lorraine now, eating her bread-and-butter and dropping tears on it without the slightest alteration in her voice — "there's my will put away in the biggest tea tin that we don't use. I'd like you to remember it. It always did seem a scandal to me for any one to die intestine."

There was no handling Dinah when she got into this state.

Luke and I bolted our food, and fled. We coaxed Lorraine to run the ends of Luke's new trousers through her machine, and then, as it was Saturday, and a holiday, went off together to climb Parnassus, and look for ships. Ships never came — or almost never — but none the less, we looked as industriously as if we had been wrecked sailors marooned out here on Hiliwa Dara, hoping for release.

Father had called the hill in the middle of the island Parnassus, because he was a poet, and used to go up there and write when he happened to have the time. I think, with the knowledge of later days, I can reconstruct much of the frame of mind that led him to settle on Hiliwa Dara. He was, as I have

said, a poet; not a very famous one, but still not unknown. He had as much of the poetic temperament as many whose names are greater, but he had, I imagine, more feeling than power of expression. Thereby hung the tragedy of his marriage. He had married a girl who believed in nothing that she didn't see, credited the existence of nothing that was not told to her in plainest of words. And father couldn't tell her the things that she ought to have known, without any necessity for telling. And somebody else, in time, proved apt at telling that which she never should have known. . . .

My little mother "played the game." If she had not, I, her daughter, would scarcely tell this tale. She loved the man of the silver tongue (I have wondered, words or no words, if he could ever have had a voice as silver as my father's was). She even told him so. She told my father. She would have told all the world. Her love, she said, was her glory. . . . I don't know what she thought it was to her husband. I suppose she did not think about that at all.

The man waited. Probably he thought — not understanding my little mother, even as she had not understood my father — that he had only to wait.

I was born — my father's own child. When I was three days old, she laid me in his arms, and asked him to take me away from the room — she wanted a good long sleep. Even the nurse was to go away.

They all went. They stayed within hearing, but no one heard a sound. . . . An hour later, my mother's body was found floating at the foot of the cliffs. They called it childbirth mania. I do not know — or perhaps, I think I do. . . .

The man? He went to "the war." You will

not want to know which war it was. He never came back.

After that, when the shadows had cleared away a little, my father being, as I have said, a poet — dreamed a dream. It was the dream that everybody has, at some period of his or her life — the dream of an island of one's own. I need not tell you about it; you have had it too. But you never hoped to realize it, and never tried. I don't think my father would have tried either — being so much of a poet — if he had not about this time met old Ivory. Mr. Ivory was a retired missionary, who had spent many years in the Pacific. Father, in his Sydney home — the beautiful little nest he had built for the bird that only wanted to fly free — talked with the strange old man, and found that he, too, had suffered. His marriage had been unhappy. His sons had been unhappy. His grandsons had been more or less unhappy. All were still living, save the grandson, who had died in a shipwreck with his wife, leaving one little baby boy, whom Ivory had adopted.

He told my father these things, and I infer that they found each other very congenial on the subject of unhappy marriages. I thought in my childish days, and I think still more now, that the Ivorys, on the whole, were a violent-willed, impetuous crowd who made too early and too hurried choices. Their very virtues, which were as fierce as everything else connected with them, probably contributed to this result. But Ivory did not think so. He thought the institution of marriage itself was to blame. He was not, and is not, alone in his error.

He told my father much about islands and island life; told him, incidentally, that islands were purchasable things, and that a man who wanted one, and

could afford to pay for his fancy, might have one as readily as he might have a horse or a house. It turned out, when inquiry was made, that few were at that time in the market. Hiliwa Dara being some miles square, of good soil, well watered, and uninhabited, naturally was valued high by the government to which it belonged. My father could not raise capital enough to buy it, and to live there as well. And yet his very soul, by now, was set on owning it.

Here old Ivory came to the rescue. He had saved money himself, and he had a curious plan in which my father, and no one else, could help him. He proposed a partnership. Lorraine, my aunt, at that time a widowed bride (for her fiancé had died in a railway accident on the morning of their marriage day), came as companion to father and future instructress to me. And father, who had neglected my christening hitherto, much to the horror of old Ivory, when he found it out, had me named " Dara " after the island. And Hiliwa Dara was bought, and the poet realized his dream.

If you had seen Hiliwa Dara, you would have envied him; it was, in every way, the island of a dream. . . .

Many Pacific islands are nothing of the kind. The " low " island, lovely though it is, is no one's dream. People do not know enough about it to dream of it — although its coloring, as a rule, is superb, unmatchable, its palm trees the best of all island palms. Hiliwa Dara was not one of these. It was " high " island, with just the tall purple peak standing up in the middle, the drooping veils of stream and cataract, the bright green climbing woods, and lawny bays, and the white, white coral shore that you have pictured so often to yourself.

It had palms in plenty — what is a South Sea island without its palms? — leaning over the green, still water of the lagoon within the reef, pluming the slopes of "Parnassus," standing out on the ends of seaward-running points, as palms do stand, just as if they had been planted there for sheer beauty. We planted a good many ourselves after coming to the island, but no one would have noticed them, since they were all set out on a rather ugly but convenient flat away at the back of the island.

Yes, it was lovely, very, very lovely. It lay in the central belt of the Pacific, where hurricanes never come, and there is so little difference between the seasons that one may well call life one long, unending summer. . . . There were rainy days, of course, sometimes day after day of rain for quite a good while; there were equinoctial gales of a kind; there were "cold" nights when the thermometer went down to sixty-nine, and everybody said that the climate must be changing, and nothing had ever been seen like it. There were hot days, plenty, when the instruments in our little thatched hut stood well over ninety at high noon, but there was never cold nor tempest, nor destroying heat; always there was a core of life and coolness in the air from the breath of the great seas; almost always there was sun, and flowers that marked two summers in the year with a double gift of bloom. Our fruits, too, came twice a year, not once, as in less generous climes. There were two seasons, marked by the changing of the winds from sluggish, sometimes stormy northwest, to the cool, clear river of the flowing southeast "trades" that ran for nearly seven months of the year without a break, through our high pale blue heavens. Some of our flowers kept no season, but bloomed endlessly. Always

there were secretive orchid blooms hiding in the great bush — flower-butterflies and moths of white and pink and yellow, of orange spotted with brown, of flesh-red tipped with color of new blood. Always the faithful frangipanni bore white, bold-centered stars, sometimes many, sometimes few, that loaded every breeze with floating honey, and the hibiscus burned red at the edges of the bush, and the paw-paw hung out waving streams of green-white blossoms, almost too cloyingly sweet. The orange trees that stood about the cave house were young, but they flowered most of the time, and fruited twice yearly, so that the stabbing scent of orange bloom blown down the entrance archway was never absent from our rooms and the golden fruit was almost always piled upon our tables. Season melted into season on Hiliwa Dara, with not so much change as comes of morning melting into afternoon. It was always lovely, it was always summer. And it was always peace.

Until the day when Dinah said there was ill luck about.

It would be absurd to say that Luke and I did not feel it, when we started on our climb of Parnassus, that splendid Saturday morning. Children are as sensitive as sea anemones to currents and movements of the minds about them. We had both felt that change was afoot, and Dinah's remarks had only underlined our own convictions. First it had been the odd, uncomradely way in which Luke had looked at me. Then it had been the demanding, and the giving of his " toga virilis "— a change that made him almost a stranger to me. Also, and underneath everything, running through and influencing everything, had been the thought of the mysterious talk of our elders round the fire last night. Of

course I had told Luke every word of it; I told him everything. But to my surprise, he had talked almost like old Ivory or Lorraine. He had told me that I oughtn't to have listened — which I knew as well as he; only I did not expect to hear it from him — and that, having listened, I must put it out of my mind at once. That, of course, made me think of it twice as much as before. And I was greatly mistaken — knowing him as I did — if he was not thinking about it too. He might be trying not to; knowing Luke's ferocious sense of honor, I thought that probable enough. But I did not believe for a moment that he was succeeding.

Unspoken, the mystery was with us both as we climbed that morning, bending low, with down-hung hands, upon the steep track that wound upwards towards the crest of the hill. There was a smell of rich unseen flowers somewhere or other, and a whiff like damp incense; that was forest gums — and an odor of ferny places, and under all, like a deep bass note underlying a high melody, the wholesome smell of dirt — clean dirt, black squelchy dirt that buried our naked feet; that felt warm and pleasant, and somehow inexplicably good. . . .

"Why does one go back to the house?" I panted, as we stopped, and flung ourselves on a bit of clear grass for a rest.

"Nobody knows," answered Luke promptly, taking up my thought. "I've read lots about that. People never do want to go back to their houses, and they love the other things, and keep escaping to them. But something always sends them back. The books say so. But they don't say what."

"I shall know when I go to the world," I exclaimed proudly. "I shall know everything about everything, then."

Luke did not answer, but chewed grass, looking at me. It struck me then, for the first time in my life, that he was a very handsome creature. I did not put it in that way; I only thought to myself that the light, bright blue of his eyes, and the width and depth of the brows that arched them over, and the straight lines of his cheeks — so unlike the apple-shaping of my own — were good things to look at, like the sea and the sunrise sky, and the rain when it fell in strong, shining lines upon the shore. . . .

I did not tell my playmate these things. It may have been because of that strange new raiment of his, that seemed to alter him and set him apart from me; but I think on the whole it was because of nothing more nor less than girlish modesty. That is a bloom that springs, sown or unsown, in the breast of every woman-child. I have never believed those tales of beautiful shameless maidens brought up alone on coral shores. A girl's modesty is as much a part of her as her eyelashes or her hair. Lorraine had never taught me anything save my ordinary schoolroom lessons; but I knew, as well as if she had lectured me twice daily on behavior to the opposite sex, that you did not tell a boy he was handsome — at least not such a boy as Luke had suddenly become. I would have told him once — last year — last night — when? I could not remember. I only knew that things, somehow, somewhen, had changed, and were not as they once had been. And, though I had no guide but the ancestral memories that slumber, almost unfelt, in every breast, I knew, very surely, that things would never be quite as they had been again.

Oh, yes, the world was changing on Hiliwa Dara.

"Hup!" said Luke suddenly, gaining his feet in

a single spring, and pulling me up immediately after. I was quite rested, but I would have rather he had left me a little longer; because I was just working my way to an idea that he knew, or guessed something about that strange conversation in the outer hall that I did not know. Something in his expression — in the way he looked at me, consideringly, as if he were thinking over matters that concerned me, but wouldn't tell me what they were — had suggested the thought; and with it had come the instant desire to make him tell me.

And then he must needs insist on hurrying on — as if we had not a good half day before us.

"He guessed, I suppose," was my resentful thought. "I hate him when he guesses. . . . Just wait; I'll make you tell me by and by."

But now we were come to the peak of high Parnassus, where the way was so steep that you could have turned at any point and sat down on the path as on a chair; and even our youthful lungs were taxed a bit. We climbed in silence, scrambling like ponies over the stones, until the last turn of the track was reached, and the fierce assault of the southeaster from which we had been shielded struck us full in the face.

"Oh, glory!" I cried, standing, with arms outspread, to drink it in. "I love, I love, I love the wind. I would rather kiss it than father. I love the grass — oh, one must love the grass when it stands up tall and dances in the wind like that! Luke, Luke, listen to the betel nuts, hear what they're saying to the wind."

On Parnassus' peak there are betel nuts, the most wonderful — to my mind — of all the wonderful palm family. I used to feel shaken with wild passion of admiration when I stood underneath one,

and saw its slim white column, no thicker than my own slim neck, trembling but not yielding to the touch of the strong trade wind, and its crest of green-fluted fans sparkling and ruffling against the blue of the high-up skies, seventy feet above.

"The betel nut's a princess," I sang. "An enchanted princess, sorrowful and proud. I could make a poem about her. The palm's a wood nymph who loves a man of the sea. Look at them below us, rushing down the slopes and bending over the lagoon; their bodies are white, and they curve like a diver. . . ."

"Look out, Sappho; don't you dive," warned Luke, clutching the tail of my short tunic, as I leaned over to look down. We learned the same lessons, so that I followed his allusion.

"Sappho," I said, with some dignity, "was a poetess, but I daresay I shall be one, but you should not call me her, because she had dark hair, and wore violets, and I have chestnut hair, father says, and there are no violets here. Besides, Sappho was not quite nice; Lorraine says so. I shall be a poetess, and I wouldn't mind jumping over the Leucadian cliff just as she did, if I was very unhappy, but I always mean to be quite nice."

Luke looked at me with that new, odd look of his. I have said that our lessons were alike, but there were a good many books in the big library room that he was allowed to read, while I was put on honor not to touch them. Now and then I was conscious of reserves and superiorities on his part, that I jealously ascribed to those shelves.

"I should certainly hope so," was all he said; but there was a stress on the "I" that puzzled me.

"It's not your business any more than any one else's," I remarked, with a chilling air.

"Isn't it?" asked Luke, without the shadow of a smile.

"Certainly not. Why should it be?"

"Why, indeed?" No — he was not smiling. What made me think he had been?

It is probable I should have asked — since I tolerated no locked doors, at that time of my life — had not something amazing happened at the moment. It was true that we had come up to the top of Parnassus to look for ships; we always did, on holiday mornings, and we conscientiously scanned the empty horizon round and round for them — almost always. Sometimes we forgot. This was one of the times. We had not looked at anything but the betel nuts and palms since the southeast trade had greeted us with its hearty embrace. . . . And there, just as I opened my mouth to say something very cutting and dignified to Luke — who really did want taking down that morning — round the point of a palmy cape came the distant, unmistakable, white-pinioned figure of a ship!

She was several miles away, right at the far end of Hiliwa Dara, and had been hidden until that moment by the loom of the promontory. But undoubtedly, if we had been up a little sooner, and looked out a little more carefully, we could have seen her making for the island. This Saturday, of all the many Saturdays in the year, we had been caught napping. It was our ambition — almost our duty, we felt — to announce the sight of any possible sail to the older and (naturally) stupider inhabitants of Hiliwa Dara. And to-day they must have seen her before we did!

We raised a shriek of "Sail-O!" that reached to the sweet-potato fields below, and set all the Niue boys and their wives screaming in their turn. Then,

hand in hand, we galloped down the track at a rate that would have led to broken necks if we had not been young, reckless, and barefooted. We took the downward slopes in bounds of twenty feet. We fell and got up again. We reached the cave house, breathless, shouting, and half wild. For the coming of a ship was no small event at any time, on our island, and none had been expected about this time. Twice in the year an auxiliary schooner called to deliver goods and take away a cargo of copra. Once or twice it had happened that our own cutter had had to run down to the nearest island group, a week or two away. But stray calls, unconsidered ships coming in on indefinite business, were things not known to Hiliwa Dara.

We found home in an unusual state of hurry and confusion. Dinah, with a large apron on, was walking from store to kitchen, and kitchen to dining hall, weeping — Heaven knows why; I am sure she did not herself. Nevertheless, she was very efficiently preparing for extra mouths at dinner.

Old Mr. Ivory had gone down to the copra house, and with shouts and waving of arms was hurrying the boys in their work of collecting and bagging the shell-white sections of cocoanut that had been drying on the trays in the sun. Lorraine, tall and willowy in her black dress, was standing outside the cave entrance, a telescope held to her eye. There was more than a bit of wind blowing, but she stood as steady as a sea captain, watching the ship come round the point.

It is in the small things that character is read. If I had held the telescope, I should have seen nothing but a swinging ball of blue. I never could — to this day I cannot — hold a telescope unsupported and look calmly at anything that interests me. It

takes such a light unsteadiness of the hand to send the view flying all over the horizon — even the quick, hard beat of one's heart will shake the telescope too much for clear visioning.

But nothing save death had ever come between Lorraine and anything she cared to have or do. There was a wonderful force of concentration in her slim body.

She lowered the telescope presently, and announced to father:

" It's not the *Anna,* or the *Pearl.* It's a brigantine with a long name that I can't quite read yet." She put the glass up again. *" Queen — Queen— Oh, Queen of the Islands."*

" By Gad," said father, looking interested, " that's Harry England's boat; I wonder what's bringing him here."

" Shall I run up to the point and shout out the course, sir? " asked Luke. His eyes were glowing with excitement.

" No need," said my father. " If that's Harry England, he could steer his ship to heaven or to hell over a razor edge in the middle of the night. See, he's conning her from the crosstrees. Take the glass, Dara; I'll hold it for you."

He steadied it over his arm, while I found the ship, and with difficulty focussed the small black figure that was swinging between heaven and earth. I held it only for an instant, but our telescope was a Zeiss of the finest, and in that instant I had a flashing glimpse of a tall figure leaning out with one arm round a backstay, in the untellably graceful attitude of the sailor conning his ship, and of a face — brown, hawky, fiercely concentrated; a face that swung high between heaven and earth, and looked

out and far, as men look only when alone. . . . It seemed almost as if I had pried. . . .

I dropped the glass, and felt I had come back from somewhere a long, long way.

So, first, I saw Harry England.

. . . . . .

"Go and change your dress, Dara; you are very dirty," said Lorraine's sweet flowing voice. I wandered off to my cave bedroom, passing Dinah on the way. She had stopped weeping now, but she carried her head very much on one side, and sighed a good deal. She had a large hot pie in her hands; it smelt extremely good. Dinah broke a piece off the edge as she went, and swallowed it with a judicial air.

"No matter who or what he is," she said, with the accent of recent tears still in her voice, "that pie's worthy of him, if he's worthy of it." She contrived — I really do not know how — to give her last remark the air of a religious saying.

"What else is there?" I asked with interest.

"Never you mind," said Dinah darkly, "I don't want none of you about the dining room, Miss Dara, feathering your pockets with the best of everything while my back's turned."

"I suppose that's one of your portmanteau words for feathering one's nest and filling one's pockets," I offered scornfully, being hurt by the (entirely just) accusation.

"You go and clean yourself, miss," was her answer, "I can't stop here, with the stew just simpering in the pot."

I went. I dressed myself in my only "good" dress — a changeable blue-and-green silk from China, that father had bought from a passing ship

because it was the color of the sea in sunshine, and because I loved the sea. I tied a fillet of the same bright stuff through my long red-brown hair, and hung about my neck my only ornament — a large crystal from the Hall of Persephone, slung to a thin gold chain. It may seem trivial to record these things. It is not. Much of my whole life's future, as it lay before me then, was to turn on just so slight a hinge as the dress and the ornaments I wore. . . .

Occupied before my mirror, I missed what I should have liked to see — the heaving to of the schooner, the stowing of her sails, the landing of her captain on our little mangrove jetty. By the time I came rustling into the big cave hall, exceedingly pleased with my own magnificence, the whole thing was over, and father was walking up from the sea beach, side by side with our new guest.

Shyness, especially in those island days, was no fault of mine. I ran to meet them, leaving Lorraine, in her trailing black, expectant at the entrance of the cave. I remember how my emerald-blue silks tossed and shimmered in the sun as I ran, and how my hair, caught by a following breeze, flowed about me in one great wave of copper, so that I had to part it with my hands, and hold it back, to see father and Captain England, when I had come up to them.

Harry England! Harry England! Even now, after all that has passed, now, with my copper hair enameled with silver, and the heavy, heavy little band on my third finger growing flat and worn, your name still clings to me. Oh, whoever she may love or marry, there is never but one man in a woman's life whose name can sing that nightingale note to her.

Think you, Mrs. Herbert Smith, Mrs. Arthur

Leighs, Mrs. Briggs, Lady Campbells, Lady William Stranges, and the rest — you are married so long that you cannot remember you were ever single; you have sons and daughters who are all the world to you; you are fond of your husbands, and proud of them. . . . But are those names that you have seen on your cards for so many, many years the names that sang to you once in the dawn of life — once, and never again? There may be a woman in a thousand — nay, I know there will be — who can answer "yes." But of the rest. . . . Well, Herbert and Arthur and William are good men, and you are glad you married them; I know you are. Let it rest at that. Men know very little — after all the ages of marriage — concerning the women they marry. We had just as soon they did not know more. You wives whose wedding rings are growing thin may fill in the blanks between my lines for yourselves.

I have flown far forward. Back I must fly again, over the years and the seas of time, to the beach of Hiliwa Dara, and to my father and Harry England walking in the sun.

When I had ended the struggle with my hair, by clubbing a great knot in it and flinging it over my shoulder, I greeted the visitor with outstretched hand.

"I am so glad to see you," I told him.

"Why are you glad, Miss Dara?" asked the captain, looking down on me from his near six feet of height, without a vestige of the patronizing smile or condescending manner that so many elders put on when speaking to children. I noted that he knew my name; I supposed he must know everything in the world. I was sure he must know the answer to his question before he asked it.

" Because captains are such brave people," I told him, " and because father says you will sail your ship through hell in the middle of the night over a razor's edge."

Father said nothing at all, as I launched this explosive. I had known he wouldn't. He was not like the ordinary parent, in many things; certainly his sense of justice, which always forbade him to blame me for quoting any of his sayings, was abnormal.

Harry England looked at me a little curiously, but I thought that he was not displeased. He did not make any direct reply.

. . . . . .

CHAPTER III

WE entered beneath the archway of the great central hall. Outside, the heat, at this mid-hour of morning, was terrific, but the moment one came under the dim, cool vault of the roof, it was a different climate. Ivory and my father, I think, did well to leave this refuge from the heat untouched by walling or concrete. Through innumerable cracks and passages blew always a fresh wind; the white sand floor was cold almost as snow underfoot. Captain England seemed to like the place; he stopped short near the doorway, and swung a rapid, brilliant glance about him.

"This is good," he said, taking off his peaked officer's cap to let the cave winds play in his hair. Lorraine moved forward; father presented him to her. I saw him add her up and set down the total in his mind, even while he was shaking hands with her, island fashion. I thought the total was not small; yet there was no smile in his eyes when he looked at her, even though his lips were smiling.

"Dinner is just ready," said Lorraine. "Will you come into the dining room?"

"I never dine," said the captain, with a sudden flash of brilliant teeth (yes, he was really smiling now, eyes and mouth together), "I breakfast and sup."

"What's that for?" asked father curiously.

"It's the secret of long life. I intend to live long," was England's reply.

"Have you been reading Luigi Cornaro?"

"Yes. And others. The book of human nature above all. It is true, Mr. Hamilton. But people love their ease."

I thought he did not look as if he loved ease overmuch, with his long, lean figure and vivid bird eyes. I thought he looked as if he would come to see his hundredth year, and live every moment of the hundred. . . .

"I wonder," said father thoughtfully, "if I tried it?" . . .

Captain England looked at him with an expression which I could not understand then, though shortly I was to comprehend it all too well.

"I don't think you should," was all he said. "And — I don't think you would find it make any difference."

Father said nothing in reply. His face, seen in the glaring light that rushed in from the archway, showed for the moment lines that I had never noticed before. Now I saw them. I saw, too, that the skin below his eyes was blue.

"Father, you read too much," I cried. "You are always reading."

"Sometimes I write," he said, with a comical twist to his mouth. I think none knew better than he that his work was "writ in water."

"Where is your workshop? May I camp there while you are at dinner?" asked the captain. It seemed almost as if he wished to change the conversation.

Father opened the cedar door, tight fitted to the wall of the cave, that gave entrance to his study. The wide, white-concreted room was lit by a lamp that burned brightly at all hours of the day and night. It was no fanciful shell ornament like mine, but a good circular wick hanging lamp from Sydney.

Close to the lamp was a long couch covered with kapok-stuffed cushions. Books and books and books again lined the walls, till one would have thought the room was built of them, as a house is built of bricks. The floor was covered with pandanus mats, plaited in red and brown.

England swept that fiery glance of his about the room, seeming to take in all it contained in an instant. He stepped for a moment into the hall, and returned carrying in his fingers, as though it were a feather, a big straight chair.

"This will do me," he said, swung it under the lamp, picked a volume from the shelves, and, with a courteous bow to Lorraine, and myself, and a "Pardon me," sat down. He was buried in the book before we had left the room.

"He doesn't like to be comfortable, father, does he?" I asked as we entered the Hall of Persephone, where Dinah, bare arms folded above snow-clean apron, stood at the end of the table with the air of a priestess conducting sacrifice. Luke was awaiting us. Mr. Ivory had not yet come in.

"Never discuss a guest," exhorted Lorraine, sweeping ahead.

"I didn't mean anything rude," I excused myself. "I was only thinking that he seemed like those monks in some of your books, who didn't eat good things, and wouldn't have nice beds, or —"

"I do not think the resemblance is very close," said my father, with a certain dryness. "Besides, my dear, Lorraine is quite right. We'll drop the subject."

"Anyhow," I said cheerfully, "there'll be all the more pie for the rest of us. I am sure, when he eats, it's like the man in Gilbert and Sullivan's playbook —'We seldom eat, but WHEN WE DO!'"

"Dara!" said my father sharply. I filled my mouth, so that perforce I was silent, and winked covertly at Luke. Despite his new-found manliness, he returned the wink. We were at one in our love of pie, a love that, I think, only children and Americans can fully understand. . . .

Dinah, with good cause this day for her inevitable tears, did not exhibit them, after all. You never could calculate on Dinah.

"No one would be a cook who could go and chop stones on the road," was her contribution, as she served the food. "Here have I been standing in the kitchen all morning, till my legs is full of haricot veins, and for all my reward, they don't come to dinner till the pie is gettin' heavy and the tea has been standin' that long that it's full nicotine and destroyin' the coats of their stomachs. But I don't look for my reward below. There's Those Above that lets not a pie fall to the ground, nor a cup of tea — which any one might allow is better for the insides than a cup of cold water — nor lets a cup of tea pass without reckonin' it up against the Last Great Day. Miss Dara, I never give you a bit of the flaky crust off of the edges; pass me your plate, Mr. Hamilton; if you knew anything of the feelings of a cook, you wouldn't mess good food about and never eat it."

"I have no appetite," said my father. He leaned back in his chair, and looked absently at his plate. "I am thirsty," he said. He drank his cup of tea, and took another.

"Dad's scored two for you, Dinah," I said wickedly. No one laughed. Lorraine seemed to be watching my father.

"I shall —" said my father, rising from the table. . . .

Then it happened.

He stopped in his speech, staggered, and fell across the table, smashing and spilling plates, glasses, dishes of food. His arms struck wildly about him, his feet, white canvas shod, rose kicking in the air. He flung himself, in a terrible convulsion, right over on his back, and I could see that his face was blue, and his mouth open.

"Oh, Lord God of Israel!" cried Dinah. Lorraine flew to his side, Luke ran to meet her, and between them, without a word, they lifted him off the table and laid him on the floor. The fearful strugglings were over; his eyes had closed, and he lay as if dead.

"Get him to his room with me," commanded my aunt. "Dinah!"

Dinah, as the strongest, came to her side. She was perfectly dry-eyed, and, now, quite self-possessed.

"It's some sort of heart fit," she said, and they carried him out. No one looked at me or thought of me. I stood in my own place at the table, where I had sprung to my feet on the moment of my father's fall. I felt as if some one had struck me violently, driving all breath from my lungs. Persephone's Hall had suddenly taken on the look of something unknown and strange; I stared at the spangling crystals, and wondered what they were. . . . What I had seen could not be true. Father — my father could not have fallen before my eyes, in the midst of our laughing talk, struck down like a stunned bullock — fatally struck. . . . For even in the midst of the blind confusion and bewilderment of this earliest tryst with Sorrow, my mind, subconsciously worked on, had told me that the blow was unto death. . . .

I did not know I knew it. I cried out like a little animal in my pain, and shrieked, "Oh, father, don't be ill!" I snatched at Luke as he went to leave the hall, and held him in a frantic grasp. "What's the matter?" I asked, and screamed again before he could answer. I was half mad at the moment. In truth, a fit of "angina pectoris"— for that was the ugly thing that sprang, tiger-like, upon the peace and happiness of our lives — is no sight for the eyes of a child.

I shall never forget Luke's goodness. He quieted me like the mother I had never known. He held me, and stroked my hair. Lorraine would have scolded, and told me to command myself. She hated people who "let go." I do not know whether Luke liked letting go any better than she did, but he liked me.

"Dara," he said gently, "you mustn't make a noise, to injure your father. I don't know what it is, but I'm sure he ought to be quiet."

"I'll go to him," I cried, struggling. For now the paralysis of mind had passed, and I desired action furiously.

"No, dear," soothed Luke, though his own face was white with alarm. "Lorraine will send for you if you are wanted. Leave him with Dinah and her. You would cry and upset things."

"Let me just go and listen — listen at the door," I sobbed, "I'll promise to be so quiet."

Lorraine would have held her point. Luke gave way, though he knew himself in the right. He went with me to the door of father's room. It opened off the central hall, next to the study, where we had left Captain England. Captain England! His call had been the event of the whole year, one little ten

minutes past. Now it was less than naught, or so I felt.

But Harry England never counted for naught in any scene where Fate might place him. We found him, as we came up to the door, just coming out. He closed the door behind him carefully, took not the least notice of Luke or of myself, and proceeded, with a kind of swift deliberation, to drop off his coat, and knot a great silk handkerchief he took from one pocket round his curiously slim, tough waist. Then he put down his head a little, and ran out through the entrance of the cave. We stared, amazed. We had never seen any one run like that. In the blazing sunshine, his white-clad figure was almost invisible; you could not tell where it touched the earth — you could scarcely see when or how it disappeared round the corner leading to the jetty — you could only tell that it vanished quite impossibly soon. . . . Why, we *knew* that it took ten minutes to walk there!

"Where has he gone?" I breathed.

"To his ship," was Luke's answer. "He wants to get something."

"She's fast to the jetty," I said. "He won't be very —"

"There he is!" exclaimed Luke, in a hushed tone of excitement. "He's coming back."

"He's flying!" I gasped. And it almost seemed as if he was.

Harry England was just seven and twenty, then, at the full height of a man's best power, and he was, though we did not know it, the champion runner of the Pacific, as well as the champion middle-weight boxer. It was a sight for the gods of Greece to see him come, running after his own peculiar way, head

rather low, hands clenched, muscles working with the magnificent loping ease of a greyhound's stride. The pat-pat of his feet sounded hollow on the last logs of the jetty, dull upon the track, sharper and sharper as it grew near — he was upon us, diving through the cave arch as an engine goes into a tunnel, and pulling up with a sliding halt, in the loose sand where we stood. We saw that the sweat was standing in drops on his forehead, and trickling down his arms, and that his chest was heaving like the sea outside the reef after a storm. We saw that he had a dark-colored glass bottle in his hand. We had no time to see more, for he opened my father's door without pausing to knock, and went in. By some mischance, he did not shut it completely, and through the crack, where we stood in the dusk of the hall, we saw a long narrow picture — Lorraine's arms and bending waist; my father's chest, still no longer, but commencing fearfully to strain and writhe in a return of the paroxysm we had witnessed; the schooner captain's hands, swift, capable, pulling out a cork and spilling something over a handkerchief. There was a smell of peardrops on the air, immediately after. I saw Lorraine's figure straighten up, and her face come into view. It bore an expression of relief; and the straining figure of my father was, all at once, quiet.

"That's done it," we heard England say. . . . "Somebody shut the door. . . ."

I don't know how time passed after that. I don't know how long it was — we huddling together in the deserted hall, with the sea sounding outside — before the movements in the room ceased, and, after a period of quiet, Harry England came swiftly and softly out, Dinah following behind. Luke made a step towards the captain, but he did not seem to

see any one; he hurried — if one could ever say that England "hurried"— out into the westering sun, and away towards his ship down the track where the leathernecks were beginning to scold and cackle in the palm tops, as they do when day is on the wane. "Tobacco, tobacco!" called one. "Oh, do come here, oh, do!" complained another. There was something reassuring about the homely, well-known sound. It seemed to me as if the earthquake had passed over — as if life were once more standing on its firm, familiar basis; as if things would be, to-morrow and the days after, just as they had been "in the beginning, and ever should be, world without end." . . .

One knows that world-without-end feeling of childhood — the strange deception that sets seeming marble underneath our feet, where in reality are but the crumbling sands of time; the mist-magnified perspective that shows us long roads stretching far and far away, changeless, infinite, golden — the brief road that leads, through rock and precipice, to the dark, near, unknown sea. There comes a day to every youth when the vision breaks. Thenceforward he knows; and his knowledge is that there is, on earth, no "forever."

I, Dara Hamilton of the island, was full young to learn so much, but Providence had willed that I should learn it, on that day.

England having failed us, I rushed at Dinah, seized the corner of her apron, and declared that she should not get away until she had told me about father. He was all right now, wasn't he? The captain had cured him. He would never be ill again?

"Your father," said Dinah — "leave go my apron, now, Miss Dara, I want to wipe my eyes —

your father, miss, has got the angelina pictorials very bad, and if Captain England hadn't near killed himself running down to the ship to get that bottle, he'd have been fit for the grave this moment. Captain England, God bless him for a hearty gentleman, has left the bottle with us, and he says he'll be back in four days from the Hawongas with more. Captain England, he put in here for water, because his main tank had got salted, and he says he's due in Hawonga this mortal moment, and can't stay not any longer."

"Grandad has stopped him just outside," put in Luke. "I suppose he's asking about it." And in truth I saw, at the moment, Harry England's tall figure standing half poised, impatiently, on one foot, near the entrance, while old Ivory, with a face of calm dismay — if such a thing can be: old Ivory never got excited — talked to him.

As for myself, my heart was growing cold again, with the chill, sick feeling that I had, for the first time in my life, met with to-day. Things were not going to be right, after all. . . .

"What did you say it was — angel? — angel? —" I asked.

"I know," put in Luke in an undertone. "It's 'angina pectoris.' They have it in the medical book."

I was not allowed to read the medical book, which Luke knew, or I think he would scarce have told me so much. The words conveyed little to me. But Dinah's face told more. She knew it, and determinedly broke away from me, alleging the instant necessity of getting back to "her" kitchen.

"What was the medicine?" I cried after her.

"He called it nightlight of almonds, but it smelt

for all the world more like pears," was Dinah's reply, as she vanished.

It was years before I learned — such was my shrinking horror of everything connected with that day of Fate — that "nitrite of amyl" had been the magic drug.

Old Ivory's talk seemed to be done. He nodded to England, and came into the hall. His face was very grave.

"Luke," he said, "come to my room; I've something to speak to you about."

I was left alone; the sun, now sinking lower, looking in at the mouth of the cave. Idly I watched it creep like a moving searchlight, from my toes to my silken dress, to my waist, to my neck. . . . I was too tired to think, almost too tired to feel. I saw the low light rise, drowning me, slowly, in a sea of fire, as the Firth tides, in Scotland, rose once about the two doomed women martyrs. As one in a dream, I looked at it, at the changing hues it made among my silks, at the sparkle that broke out as it touched the crystal round my neck — climbing, always climbing. . . .

Then I saw that Harry England was not gone. He was still at the cave entrance, and he was looking at me — looking at my neck.

He made two quick steps into the cave.

"Where did that come from?" he asked me.

"What?"

"That bit of crystal round your neck." He was beside me now. "May I?" he asked, and with deft fingers unfastened the chain. He held the crystal in his hand, touching it with his finger tips and examining the angles.

"It came from the Hall of Persephone — the

dining room. It's like those tourist caves in Australia — Jenolan, you know."

"Can you show me this hall?" he asked, giving me back my locket.

"Yes," I said, and led the way. There was no one about. Luke and old Ivory were shut up together, Lorraine was with my father, Dinah in her kitchen. We passed unnoticed down the dark passage, and into Persephone's Hall.

Within, it was almost dark; the one great window faces east, and the sun was now far down to westward. The captain stood in the middle of the hall, his vivid, hawk-like eyes roaming about him. He took a powerful electric torch from his pocket, and snapped it on. Under the strong white light, the crystals shone as I had never seen them shine before; it was indeed a cave of diamonds.

England looked about him silently for some moments, and then bent to pick up a fragment that had fallen from the roof. It was a mere chip of glassy stuff, not especially attractive. He glanced at it, and slipped it casually into his pocket, snapping off the torch as he did so. The hall was dim as we made our way out again; I could not see his face. I did not judge that he was specially interested.

"Do you think it is as good as Jenolan?" I asked him, jealous of the reputation of our great wonder.

"It's rather like — and very pretty," was his answer. I acquired an impression that he had not said quite what he thought.

"It *is* as good, I'm sure — I'm sure!" I thought rebelliously. "Some day I shall go and see that other place and I shall think nothing of it at all." . . .

We came out into the central hall. The doors

were still shut, the place still silent. The sun now had climbed to its last vantage point, and hung, in flakes of gold, among the vaultings of the roof. Limestone, white as the white sea sands, was the stuff of this great cave; but the passage to the Hall of Persephone, close at hand, ran through basalt black as night.

England looked at the mingling of the two rocks. It seemed to interest him. "Pretty, that contrast of black and white," he said. Then, suddenly, he stooped to me, and lifted my hair in two great waves. "*You* are pretty," he said, holding me by my hair. He slipped his narrow, steel-like hands down to my waist, lifted me like a kitten, and, swinging me in the air, kissed my mouth. Dizzy, I leaned against the wall, when he set me down. I had not breath to speak. I felt as, I think, young maids of harried East Anglia must have felt, in early centuries, when pirate galleys drove suddenly in from "Norroway, o'er the faem," and some tall, gold-locked heathen seized a little lassie by the hair, and swept her away to the ships with the dragon beaks, never to return any more. . . .

But Captain England had not swept me away; he had merely kissed me good-by, as passing guests of my father's had done, many a time. Where was the difference?

I did not know. I only knew that Harry England, the wild hawk of the seas, had shaken me in his claws, and that the world was shaking and whirling round me, because of it.

With the instinct of a frightened lamb, I rushed to the fold, I forgot my father's illness. I flung open the door of his room, and ran in; Lorraine was there; she was sitting in a chair, reading. My father lay on his bed, pale, but — to my eyes —

quite well. There were damp cloths about the room; the smell of peardrops still lingered.

"What is it?" asked Lorraine, raising her emerald eyes from the book.

I could not say what it was. I did not know.

"Captain England is gone," I stammered. "I said good-by to him."

"Is he away?" asked Lorraine, rising with that inevitable sweep of her draperies. "Some one should have thanked him."

"I don't know," I stammered.

"I will go and see," said Lorraine, sparing me the reproof for awkwardness that would otherwise have been my inevitable portion. I followed her out to the archway. There was nothing to be seen of Harry England; but a sailor, a coffee-brown islander, with a plump figure and large black swimming eyes, was wandering about, apparently looking for some one. He was very cleanly dressed in white drill trousers and blue jumper; he wore a broad-brimmed man-of-war hat. While we looked, trying to see behind the clumps of the palms, if the schooner was making sail, another youth appeared and joined the first. They talked in some island dialect; their voices were singularly sweet. I saw them staring hard at Lorraine and at me. I saw Lorraine's expression suddenly change.

"What's the matter?" I asked her. Lorraine was wonderfully clever with island tongues; she had mastered more than one.

"Do you know what they are saying?" I asked.

"Yes," she said curtly.

"What is it?" Even as I asked, I knew she would not tell me — at least, not any more than she chose to tell.

"They are saying," she answered me, choosing

her words, "that they ought not to have come up here, but that the captain will be angry if any one lets him miss the tide."

"What else, Lorraine?" She did not answer me.

But the answer came otherwise. A gust of wind blew suddenly up the track from the sea — it was the breeze that comes with the going down of the sun — and seized the wide hat of one of the sailors. He caught at it; and the string that held it under his chin gave way; the hat blew off — and down over the blue jumper, down to the knees of the white drill sailor trousers, fell a long, snaky coil of hair.

The other sailor shrieked, laughed, and fled down the track with the unmistakable swaying run of a girl. In the same moment Harry England leaped from the rocks above the cave arch — what he could have been doing there was beyond me to imagine — and landed on the track. He did not see Lorraine and myself; the light was low now, and we were in the shadow of the cave. More, he did not know — how could he? — that the short rocky defile leading to the archway was a veritable Whispering Gallery, and carried every sound. He took two steps to the blue and white figure with the tumbling hair, and spoke to it, not loud, but furiously; we heard him. I put my hands over my ears. I backed into the cave, white and shaking. Lorraine retreated with me. She, too, was white.

"Was that swearing?" I whispered. No one, before, had so much as damned an unruly native in my presence.

"Yes," said Lorraine. The captain's figure was passing out of sight; the strange sailor had run ahead.

"I have heard of him," said Lorraine, shaken

out of her usual self-possession so far as to speak to me almost as an equal. " I've heard of the way he swears — and of those women sailors — they say there are no men in the Pacific better hands on a ship — he trained them himself. Of course, he has men as well — Dara, your father owes his life to that man, and you must not forget it, but Captain England "— she spoke with emphasis —" Captain England is the wickedest man in the Pacific."

CHAPTER IV

AFTER the great tidal wave of emotion that had submerged us all on Hiliwa Dara, came the ebb of the flood. No one did, or said, or even thought very much for three or four days, with the exception of old Ivory, who had passed beyond the age of passionate feeling, and seemed little, if at all, affected by the experience that had changed the face of the world for us younger folk. The overseeing of the cocoanut plantation, which was Ivory's task, suffered not at all in the days succeeding father's terrible attack. Luke dreamed over and bungled his lessons and his routine doctoring of the trees (you have no idea, unless you are a plantation proprietor, how much sickness, and how much hospital practice, there is sure to be among your rubber trees or palms). I was frankly idle. Lorraine was too much occupied in attending father to interfere with me; and she, too, I think, was suffering from reaction. As for Dinah, nothing on earth (or beneath it) could make her more tearful or more pessimistic than she habitually was.

So four days passed. I have never had any very clear recollection of that time. The things that came before, and after, stand up so high in the memories of my life that all else is dimmed in their long shadow.

Have you ever ascended the Peak? *The* Peak, that of Teneriffe, almost the only one of the world's great mountains that springs clear from sea level to crown without intervening foothills? I have

ascended it; I have climbed its twelve thousand feet in a day and a half, standing, at evening, on the ten thousand foot slope to see the marvel that is never forgotten by any who have looked on it — Teneriffe's sunset. Before you is spread the colossal map of the Atlantic, blue, painted with huge islands; the pearly-green rim of Teneriffe itself, infinitely far down; the tortured, rocky tableland of the Canadas, over which you have toiled all day; the slopes of the Rambleta cone, with the long warp of its track shuttling from side to side. Behind you the sun is setting; there is still sunlight at your feet, but a purple point, a finger of shadow from behind you, is creeping . . . creeping . . .

The finger broadens to a wave; the wave engulfs you — and your comrades, and the shelter hut on the terrace where you stand — washes the terrace itself, flows over the edge. It has touched the Canadas now, three thousand feet below you; it is flowing across the plain. And now you see its shape — not formless, but definite; tall, pointed, triangular. You cannot, for the moment, remember what it is that the thing resembles — and then, suddenly you know.

This marvelous shadow, the shadow of the peak behind you, is shaped like the pointer of a sundial. Like a sundial pointer it moves, on and on. Its colossal march shakes your heart; it passes the tablelands, vanishes down the outer slopes, and shows itself again, sweeping relentlessly onward, like the gnomon of Time itself passing over Eternity's dial, until at last its purple apex rests upon the ultimate sea line, a hundred and fifty miles from where you stand, and the finger that crept from beneath your feet had spread across the confines of the world, and the flood comes up, and there is night . . .

Years after my island days, when I stood on the mighty Peak, and saw that little shadow " no larger than a man's hand " grow and grow and sweep across the world, I thought of one day in my life — the day of which I am now to write.

It was a dull day, I remember, quiet, with dropping rain, and sea like a shield of tarnished silver. Father had seemed rather weak in the morning, but grew brighter towards noon, had a couple of boys up from the plantation (he would never let a woman do any heavy work) to carry him from his bedroom into the study, where he lay on his reading couch, the door wide open to the hall. He did not read; he seemed to be thinking deeply. Rain came on rather heavily towards one; I remember, so well, the smell of it through the open archway — warm, wet dust, and cold odors of driven leaves and gusts, now and then, of the new-mown hay smell of pandanus trees, thrashed about by the squall. We had had dinner; old Ivory was looking for his cloak, preparatory to going out again — no weather ever daunted the determined old man — when father beckoned him to him from his room.

Old Ivory stopped short. It seemed as if he knew what father wanted of him, for a sudden wave of expression crossed his usually impassive face. I could not read the meaning of it; yet I guessed, somehow, that it concerned a thing he had been expecting, and — perhaps — desiring, too. He went into father's room and shut the door, and there followed for some time a low murmur of voices.

Then Ivory came out, and his glance went straight to me. I thought he was going to speak, but he did not; he merely pointed me into my father's room. And I, too, went in and shut the

door. And I felt — I cannot tell how, but I know that the certainty seemed to run in my blood and beat in my heart — that now, this moment, I was to know the secret that had been so long kept from me. For that there was a secret, and that it concerned myself, and also my boy comrade, Luke, I had been certain of ever since that evening — such a little while past, and yet so long ago, when I had lain with my face hidden in my hair, at father's feet, listening to the talk of my elders round the fire . . .

Father, lying on his couch, reached up and took my hand. There was love, and sadness, in his eyes. He held my fingers, and kept stroking them as he spoke.

" Dara, life's very uncertain," he said. " No one knows how long he may have to stay, your daddy doesn't know, but he thinks it mightn't be very — Now, dear child, if you cry how can I talk to you? Try and listen to me as quietly as you can, just for a minute —" He was still holding and stroking my hand; the touch of his long white fingers seemed to soothe me. I ceased my sobs, and looked at him. What did the future matter? The future was a thing that didn't exist. To-day did exist, and here was father, alive and holding my hand.

" That's right," he said. " Sit down on the end of the lounge, and we'll talk sensibly. You must try hard to understand me, Dara; you are only a little girl, but I've got to talk to you as if you were much older, because when you are grown up, I shan't — have — the chance." He broke off for a moment, and closed his eyes.

" Are you in pain, father? " I cried. " Shall I fetch Lorraine? "

" I am in pain, my dear," he said, opening his

eyes again, and fixing on me a look that I could not understand. "But it's not a pain that Lorraine can do any good to." The memory of childhood misses nothing. Years and years after, when life had taught me separation and sorrow, I remembered the look there was on father's face as he spoke to me so calmly; I understood just what was the thought he had had of me in the days to come, walking alone on roads that he was never to see. Were they to be smooth or stony? Were they to lead through deserts, or through orchard lands and flowers? He could not know.

It was this agony, not any pain of his illness, that had made him close his eyes, to hide the wave of sorrow that swept over his brave heart.

I saw that he was troubled, and groped, in my childish way, after the cause.

"You are thinking that I can't understand what you want to say, father," I cried. "But I'm sure I can, I will try so hard — and I know a little about it already; it has something to do with Luke, hasn't it?"

"It has everything to do with him," was father's answer, and then he was silent for a moment, trying, I think, to put what he had to say into the shortest and simplest form. In the stillness I heard the sea breathing heavily, a long way off. I heard a broken murmur of people talking in the hall; a plantation boy, outside, kept on steadily chopping firewood — shack-shack! shack-shack! again.

My father spoke slowly, and making choice of words. It is only in these days that I can realize the difficulty of his task.

"Mr. Ivory and I have seen a great deal of unhappy marriages. When we decided to run Hiliwa Dara Plantation together, we had the

thought that we might save Luke and you from that sorrow. We thought that if two children were kept away from the evils of the world during the young years that matter most, brought up pure and good, and intentionally reared for each other, their characters would grow together — you remember Shakespeare —' So we grew together, like to a double cherry '— and they would have every chance two mortals can have of happiness in marriage. Well, it seems to promise better than we could have thought. I bargained in my own mind only for an average nice lad, and I've found Luke — who is, my dear daughter, though you don't know it, and won't for many years — who is something quite uncommon and fine in the way of boys, and will be a man in ten thousand. As for you, Dara darling, you are pretty and you are loving, which is all a man wants — or knows he wants — in his wife; and Lorraine and I between us have taken care that you shall have more firmness of character than most loving women have. Half the tragedies of life come from the fact that loving women are very often weak, and strong women not loving — or not lovable — But I'm going above your little head, now."

He stopped — I think he needed to take breath — and ran his hand lovingly through my cloak of copper hair.

"Now don't speak now," he said, as I opened eager lips, "you will have time to talk by and by. We agreed, Ivory and I, that you and Luke were to be engaged as early as possible; we'd fixed that when you were fourteen and he was fifteen, you would be old enough to know at least what you were doing, and that you should give a conditional kind of promise to one another then. Lorraine and I

had settled that you must be sent to school for a year, and fourteen would be as good a time as any. At fifteen you could have come back to the island; Luke was to return the next year, when you were sixteen and he eighteen, and we had planned — Ivory and I — to have the wedding then, or a year later."

"Does Luke know?" I burst in, exceedingly interested. I could keep silence no longer.

"Ivory told him to-day, and asked if he had any objection to the plan. It was only just to you to do so before speaking to you."

"Why?" I interrupted again.

"Because, in the event of his having any feeling whatever against it, nothing would have been said to you, and you would not have had the humiliation of knowing."

"What did he say?" I demanded, in the wildest excitement. This seemed to me the funniest, most entertaining, altogether most piquant incident that had yet marked my short life.

"He said that it was not altogether news to him, from things he could not help hearing and noticing — the boy is growing up very fast — and he said that nothing in the world would please him more. I haven't finished yet, Dara. There's a great deal to come, but it can be put in a very few words for all that."

"Well, I don't know what more there could possibly be," I exclaimed, sitting up very straight on the end of the couch and throwing back my hair. "It's a perfect Niagara of things happening as it is."

"There is — more," said my father slowly. "It is difficult to explain to you. Dara, you must let

me say, without any more tears, my darling, that I know my time is short. Things have been altogether changed by this illness of mine —"

"I will let you say anything you like, because I don't believe it," I burst in. "I know you are going to live for years and years — till you are quite, quite old, as old as forty —"

My father laughed a little. His forty-fifth birthday, as I know now, was just a day behind him.

"So I won't cry, because there is nothing to cry about," I finished. "And now, father, what more is there? Am I going to school?"

"Soon, Dara, very soon, but not just now. A little longer yet . . ."

He seemed to be half dreaming for a moment; and I heard him, softly, repeating to himself the words of a forgotten poet:

> "A little longer yet, a little longer,
> The tenderness of twilight shall be thine." . . .

"Then is Luke going?" I interrupted.

"Yes. Luke is going — to-morrow afternoon."

"Oh, oh, father! Lorraine will never be able to get his shirts all ready!"

"If she doesn't, more can be bought. It is not a matter of shirts, girlie. Captain England is coming back in the morning; the boys saw his sail just over the horizon, from the top of the island a little while ago, and you know it always takes a sailing ship overnight to get in here, at this time of the year, if she isn't sighted till afternoon. England is always in a hurry; he is coming to leave the medicine he offered to get me from the Hawongas, and we must be prepared not to delay him."

I digested this information in silence for a moment

or two. I thought I was glad — was I? — that the romantic, wicked schooner and her dark sea hawk of a captain were to return; I was sorry that my good comrade Luke was going so soon. . . . The two emotions seemed to toss and beat against one another in a very tideway of feeling. I could not find words to express either.

Father went on:

"Luke is going to-morrow afternoon. And to-morrow morning, Dara, it is the great wish of Mr. Ivory and myself and, I may say, of Luke also — though he hardly counts, at his age — that you and he should be married."

Now I sprang to my feet and stared, as if my father had said "hanged."

"But, father," I stammered, "only grown-up ladies are married. How could I be?"

"That is what I have to explain, and you must listen carefully just as if you were at lessons," said my father. "Hiliwa Dara Island belongs to the Hawongas, though it is so far out. Now the Hawongas are under British, not Australian or any other colonial, law. And England sets the minimum age for marriage with the consent of parents and guardians at twelve and fourteen. You and Luke are old enough to marry, with the consent of Ivory and myself. And Mr. Ivory is an ordained minister, licensed to perform marriages in the diocese of Hawonga. You remember his marrying Lala and the overseer." For there had been a native marriage on the plantation not many months before.

"Do you understand?" asked my father.

"Yes," I said. "Yes, father, I — think so. But — why does nobody get married at twelve if that is so? Wouldn't it be fun if they did?" I went on, laughing. "Imagine the brides in long stock-

ings running up the aisle, and the bridegroom sucking toffee in the carriage! And wouldn't they enjoy their wedding cake, with nobody to say 'You have had quite enough.' Father, shall we have a cake? Oh, do say we shall." The thought of a wedding cake all my own, such as I had seen pictured in our many magazines, and such as I had tasted in little wedges sent, boxed, through the post, seized on my mind, and quite drove out the remembrance of the first question I had asked. But father answered it, nevertheless.

"It's not quite unknown. The poet Edgar Allan Poe married a girl of thirteen, and so did the novelist Mayne Reid. But it is not thought wise, for many reasons you are too young to understand, that very young people should marry. Such a case as yours hardly ever arises."

He did not tell me what my case was; I thought I understood, but I did not know that father on his deathbed, and Ivory, beginning now to stagger under the weight of nearly ninety years, knew they had all but lost in the race with Time, and were, for that reason, resolved to have their will carried out before the tireless runner with the scythe went past them, on the post. . . .

On that point I was easily satisfied.

"But about the cake?" I demanded. This was really important. Only once in your life could you hope to own a whole large cake, of the richest kind, all to yourself.

"You shall have one," answered father, with a smile. "The best that Dinah can make."

"With plums, and citron, and lots of white icing on top?"

"Certainly."

"May I go and tell her?"

"Yes. And after you have attended to that matter, you had better speak to Luke."

I did not catch the tone of sarcasm; no doubt it was not intended that I should. Yet memory reproduces it, after all these years. Very, very young, even for twelve, I must have appeared to father. I wonder now that I did not hesitate. . . . But the hand of Death was on him; and he must have felt, I think, that any and every means were justifiable by which my future might be secured.

How well I can follow his thoughts of me in the light of all that came after! Pretty, impulsive, ever warm-hearted for safety, a girl sure to love and to sorrow, a girl with her mother's sad heredity behind her — I can understand that the thoughts of my future, orphaned, pressed like a stone on his heart. And Luke and I were such good comrades — and we had been, as I now was told, consciously reared to suit, to love, to mate with one another. And — a lower, yet an important phase of the question — Hiliwa Dara plantations, if divided, were no great fortune for two, but if kept together and managed by the lad who had been reared on the island and trained to plantation work, they would furnish, all our lives, a decent, comfortable, steadily rising income.

Yes, I can see my father's point of view. And yet, for all that, I think that he and Ivory played rashly with my fate. He who lays violent hands on the future of another, even in love, too certainly sows sorrow.

Luke, rising fifteen, and, like all the Ivorys, manly while yet a boy, must, I think, have received something of a shock when I rushed out of my father's room, burning with my important news and, seeing him in the hall, called out this only —"Come and

tell Dinah about our cake!" I remember still the look that he gave me — half laughing, half pitiful — as he came across the hall to meet me and, taking my little hand — so small inside his great brown paw — went with me down the dark, windy corridor that led to Dinah's domain.

It was a fine room, this kitchen. Father and Ivory had spent a good deal of money on it; it was concreted all over, roof, walls and floor; and lighted — since the cavern was too far in for windows — by a couple of big lamps. There was an excellent stove, imported from Sydney, and Dinah's battery of cooking utensils, polished up like so much jewelry, made a brave show upon the walls.

"Dinah," I shrieked, frog-jumping into the room, "have you heard the news?"

"I have," she answered, turning round with a saucepan in one hand and a spoon in the other, "but I doubt if you have, Miss Dara, by the way you're behaving; or, if you have, I doubt you haven't understood it. Young ladies that's going to be married didn't ought to frog-hop. There's only one thing as serious as a marriage, and that's a funeral, and you never seen no one frog-hopping in the presence of a corpse. Nor should you see any one that's as good as standing before the altar. On my wedding day with my poor husband, that's lying inside of a first quality cash-iron railing to-day, I walked up the church as serious as I walked up it after his coffin four years and two weeks after."

Strange to say, it was this speech of Dinah's — entirely typical of her topsy-turvy view of life — that first made me understand, by ever so little, the nature of the estate on which I, a careless child, was entering. Luke had never troubled himself before to interfere when Dinah, or any one else, reproved

my childish faults. But now I saw his deep blue eyes suddenly take fire, and he laid his hand protectingly on my arm.

" Dara shall walk or jump in any way that she likes, so long as *I* don't object," he said; and there were at least a dozen capitals in the " I."

Dinah dropped the point at issue.

" I suppose you want something, Miss Dara, or you wouldn't be here," she observed, stirring at her saucepan.

" We want," put in Luke before I could speak, " we want you to make us the best kind of cake you can for to-morrow. With icing and everything good. You know, I'm going away by the schooner, and it'll be your last chance for a long, long time."

Dinah laid down the saucepan deliberately, handed me the spoon, and said in a muffled voice — " Stir it, miss, again it doesn't burn," and flowed into tears — one could never say she " burst "— the process was too calm.

" There is nothing but deaths and separations in this world," she sighed. " When I left home and come out to Australia by the Sewage Canal it was all saying good-by; and then my husband died, and then I come up here with your father and Miss Hamilton, and it was good-bys to every one then, and now, Master Luke, it's you, and will be Miss Dara soon, and I shall miss you, though you do go galloping through my stores like young Corsages on the stairs of Russher." She wept more loudly.

" You shall have the cake," she sobbed from behind her apron. " It's the last thing I can do for either of you. Our loss is your gain, Master Luke, and I hope it'll be well with you."

I incline to think nowadays that Dinah's love for and frequent attendance at funerals had resulted in

permanently affecting her choice of language. Certainly any stress of emotion always brought out the conventional mourner phrase.

Weeping, she motioned away the saucepan which I presented to her, being by this time tired of stirring.

"Set it away," she said, in a tone of one who renounces worldly things. "This is no time for white sauces. If I'm to be ready before the end, I must be beating my eggs now. Perhaps you'd not mind, though it is your last day, Master Luke, sending one of the boys to the henhouse as quick as you can find him."

"Come on, Dara," said Luke. I think he found the atmosphere a trifle too emotional; boylike, he hated scenes.

Under the great archway, as we came into the hall, the sun was beginning to slant, as it always did in the latter hours of the afternoon — as it had done on that afternoon four days ago, when the wild hawk of the islands, finding me alone, had swooped down and touched me in the midst of his fierce flight. It might have seemed strange to me, had I been old enough to think about such things at all, that I remembered that kiss of Harry England's; that I, to whom kisses hitherto had been alike and all indifferent, could feel it on my lips as I stood in the waning sunlight, and looked out to the far blue strip of sea on which, even now, the *Queen of the Islands* was speeding fast to Hiliwa Dara and to me.

Luke seemed to have nothing to say; he looked at me once or twice, with that strange, sweet, pitiful kindness that I had noticed before, opened his lips, hesitated, and turned away.

"Aren't you going to see about the eggs?" I reminded him.

"Yes, I'll go and see about the eggs," he said, and went.

"What is the use of talking to her?" was his thought (I did not know it then, but years afterwards I did) —"She cannot understand anything serious."

And yet I understood, better than he thought. All the rest of that afternoon one phrase, one tone of voice were ringing in my mind, " . . . Any way — so long as *I* don't object." . . .

It was the husbandly tone, though I did not know it, though Luke was but a boy. And I, who was no more than a child, was yet woman enough, with the experience of all the race behind me, to feel that tone strike coldly on my heart. . . .

In the evening my father had the couch carried out of his room for the first time since his attack, and lay in the center of the great cave hall, by the light of the driftwood fire, as had always been our custom on Hiliwa Dara. He seemed tired — very, very tired — but entreated, lying there in the midst of us all — old Ivory seated on his seaweed-cushioned throne, Lorraine in her deck chair; Dinah, with a poor-relation air of humility about her, knitting somewhere in the background; Luke and I sprawling on the fire-warmed sand. It was much to my father, I think, to see even once again that family group. He had not thought, in these last days, to see it.

Ivory read prayers, selecting for the Scripture portion the latter part of the fifth chapter of Ephesians, and thundering out St. Paul's exhortations to wives, with special emphasis on all the texts about obedience. His Michael-Angelo-Moses manner was in full swing that night; I know he longed to get up and preach a sermon. But he let us off with a

specially lengthened prayer, containing so many "gags" aimed at myself, and so many quotations about Rachael and Sarah and other stuffy Biblical matrons that I nearly fell asleep before it was over. When the Doxology, boomed forth in a tone that suggested anything but blessing, set us free, I hopped up with all possible speed, and stretched myself yawningly and irreverently before lying down in my favorite posture in the sand. Ivory had stalked off to put away his books.

"Do you suppose," I asked Luke, "that I'm going to obey you?"

"I don't suppose anything," answered Luke. "But I know you're going to promise to."

"Do you think I will?"

"I suppose you will, when I'm in the right and you're wrong."

"You mean to be always in the right, don't you?"

"I mean to try."

I looked at him. It struck me, all at once, as passing strange that I was to spend my life — all my life — all those long future years when Ivory would be dead, and father would be dead, and Dinah and Lorraine, and no one left but Luke and myself — with just this Luke, this heavy-browed, calm-eyed lad who was beside me now. For the moment it frightened me. Marriage, all in an instant, became something quite other than the joke, the exciting, funny incident of a day, that I had been considering it. It loomed up large and long — amazingly long.

Father drew me to him, stroking my hair — he was proud of my pretty hair, as I think my mother might have been. In his other hand he took a hand of Luke's.

" Listen, you children," he said, in that sweet, silvery voice of his — the voice of one (I know it now) not fated to live long . . . " This ceremony that you will go through to-morrow is the attempt that Mr. Ivory and I have made to cheat Fate for the two people we love best. We've worked to that end ever since you were babies. Luke, you may have thought your grandfather sometimes hard—"

Ivory had been hard; I have not the space to tell, nor would it advantage any one if I did, all the details of that Spartan rearing.

" But he has always kept not only your welfare in his mind, but my little girl's as well. And Lorraine and I have thought of you, Luke, more than you could understand, in our bringing up of Dara. We have faith in you both, and to-morrow we are putting that faith to the test. We elders are committing you two to a promise — that will tie your future. If, when you are both of age, you should mutually decide that the promise had better not have been given, it will, I think, be possible for the law to break it before it passes into the bond that is, in the eyes of all good men and women, unbreakable, that of true marriage. One of you will not be able to break it without the consent of the other. I hope, and I believe, that no questions of this kind can arise at any time; but I am speaking of it so that you may both understand every view of the matter.

" Never in the future can you, Luke — once to-morrow is past — mortgage your life and the character of your children to unworthy, enticing women such as you are sure to meet with again and again. You, Dara, can never make the mistake of marrying a man who does not understand you, or a man whose character is such that I would not wish to put your hand in his, if I were there — if I were there " . . .

The silver voice almost broke, but recovered itself, and went on:

"We may have taken from you something that youth values — the love quest, the wonder, the surprise of finding your mate — but we've given you, we hope and trust, something better — the certainty of quiet happiness."

Luke and I had been listening, almost as if it were Sunday and old Ivory were reading service. I do not know how much Luke understood of all that my father said; I think he missed very little, if anything, of the deep meanings that underlay that silver speech. For me, much of what my father said was merest words — but I could sense the solemnity of it all, perhaps, as well as Luke. Dinah had slipped away; we had quite forgotten Lorraine. But she recalled herself to our minds before the last words were fairly out of my father's mouth.

I can see her now, standing, in her black robes, drawn up to her full height, her long white hands, so like my father's, hanging straight at her sides, her emerald eyes shining in the light of the emerald driftwood flames. Her head was somewhat raised, her chin seemed to point at my father, almost like a mocking hand.

"Arthur," she said, "I have only one word to say to you, and that is — Stop. Stop before it's too late."

Father looked at her.

"You know, Lorraine," he said, "that you and I think differently."

"I think," said Lorraine, and now her voice rang out with the note in it as of a wild bird singing — singing with a thorn in its heart . . . "I think that you're robbing those two children of the only thing

on earth that makes this wretched life of ours worth living."

"That has been all talked out," answered my father. "You know what I think. What Ivory thinks. What every one thinks who has suffered as we have. We think that the one in a million chance of the thing you speak of is not enough to stake the whole of life on."

"And I think," said Lorraine, "I who never held more than the shadow of it in my arms — I think that even that shadow is worth the substance of a hundred drowsy years. I think, with that wise old man whose book you locked up for fear the children should read him:

> "'One glimpse of it within the tavern caught,
> Better than in the temple lost outright.'"

Her voice died down; she stood looking at the flames, and at the ashes of the flames that had been.

"Lorraine," said my father very gently, "it is time for bed."

CHAPTER V

AND the night passed, and the dawn came, and it was my wedding day.

Very early I rose, before the birds in the dark mango domes outside my window were well awake, before the sound of the hacking tomahawks from the woodshed told that the cooky-boys were busy making fires. I bathed and dressed — the tide was too low for swimming to-day — and went out into the early dawn light alone.

It was the gray hour when the world is still and, waiting, holds its breath. The sea, at low neap tide, lay as if dead beyond the fringing reef, gray glass in color, with drifts of black, moveless weed. The sky, here to westward, was wool gray, touched with faintest pink, as of a faded shell. Out on the water, a long way out, pale fires beneath the lightening sky were waking up to life. And in the midst of the fires, a picture of tinted ivory touched with gold, lay waiting, motionless, the *Queen of the Islands*.

I cannot describe how that sight struck me on the heart. But you, to whom ships of Fate have come sailing with their freight of sorrow or of joy, will know. You people of the vast Pacific world, above all, will understand; for to you all grief, all gladness, fortune and misfortune, life and death itself comes by the white wings of sailing ships or behind the black funnel of the steamer. You know, as people of the continents cannot know, the long, drugged

calm, with all events in abeyance, all thoughts held in suspense, that marks the interval between boat and boat — the childlike absorption in little things of the moment, the fancy that does not range beyond the events of a day and a night. You know, too, the sudden tearing of the veil, the breaking of the dream, that comes with the first sight of trailing smoke on the horizon, or the pricking up of a tiny point of sail away on the line that is for us, without metaphor, the very rim of the world. . . .

I saw the *Queen of the Islands;* I felt, what I had only known before, that Luke and I were to be parted to-day, and I struck my hands before my face and wept.

The tears may not have been all for him, I could not have known then that they were not. But there may — I say it now, after years of wider knowledge — there may, in the strange emotions that overpowered me, have been a drop of the stirring, intoxicating philter that had been held to my lips on the day when Harry England, the wild hawk of the islands, paused at Hiliwa Dara in his flight. Oliver Wendell Holmes has said that all emotions in women of a certain age, or rather youth, run to love. I think that in a girl — above all a girl who is nearing the emotional age " Where the brook and river meet "— all feelings, whether of deep sorrow or deep joy, run to tears. I think that, on that morning of my Fate, both were held, hidden, in my weeping.

Luke's hand on my shoulder roused me.

" What are you crying for? " he asked; but I felt that he knew. It seemed hardly necessary to answer, as he drew my hands down from my wet eyes:

" Because you are going away to-day."

"Dear little Dara," he said, with more tenderness than I had ever heard in his voice. "You were not crying about anything else?"

"Oh, no," I said, and indeed I thought so.

I wiped my eyes with my small knuckles, having, as usual, lost my handkerchief. Luke, whom I now perceived to be splendidly dressed in a new white suit with coat and long trousers, took a clean handkerchief from his pocket, and gave it to me.

"Why, you are all dressed up," I said wonderingly. "Where did you get the clothes from?"

"It's the suit that Gran has been keeping for me to wear for going away to school. It ought to be too big, because he didn't intend to send me for another year, but you see I fill it out."

"I wonder are you big for a boy of your age?"

"I don't know, but I think I must be. It's dreadful to think how much I don't know, about everything. Of course I remember how things look in towns, because I was six when we came here, but I don't know what boys of my own age are like, except from books, and I can't play football — it's good luck that your father taught me cricket — and I've never had to spend money, and — oh, lots of things."

"Why, Luke, father says you're the best educated boy of your age he ever knew."

"I shall pass the exams. all right. But boys don't like you because you know your lessons. I may get on with them because I'm strong, and have learned boxing; it's wonderful what Grandad knows about it, for a missionary and an old man. He's taught me everything —" Luke broke off a moment, and I suspected, again, abysses of strange knowledge in which I, as a girl, was expected to have no share.

" He has been very good to me. I can see it now. You know, Dara, I have a feeling that I may never see him again."

" Why, Luke, of course you will."

" I don't know. He is almost ninety, and lately I can't help thinking he isn't quite what he used to be. And he said, once, ' When I go, my boy, I shall go as men of my kind do — I shan't die inch by inch, I shall fall like a forest tree.' And I am not to come back again for four years."

" I don't want you to go away for four years," I said, waiving the question of old Ivory, which seemed to me unimportant. "I'll have nobody to talk to — because Lorraine is nobody, and I'm not allowed to talk to natives, and father is sick, and mustn't be bothered. It will be horrid. How am I going to stand it for four years? "

" You won't have to," said Luke. " They mean to send you to school in the Hawongas, at Port Hervey. Your father thinks, as you are going to live in the tropics, you had better not be taken away South. Grandad says he doesn't agree with him; but he thinks it doesn't matter very much. You know he's awfully old-fashioned about women."

" I shall like Port Hervey; I've seen lots of pictures of it. When am I going? " I asked excitedly.

Luke hesitated, and looked at me strangely, almost sadly.

" I think in a few weeks," he said, " but don't say anything about it. They may not have meant to tell you . . . yet."

I could not translate the " yet." Nevertheless the day was to come — and soon — when its meaning was to be all too clear to me.

I opened my mouth, primed with a dozen different

questions. Luke seemed to be unusually, delightfully communicative this morning.

"Don't ask me anything more," he warned hastily. "I've been talking almost too much already."

"Well, just one thing."

"What?"

"What are you going to do in four years?"

"Come back here and manage the plantation — with you."

"Will you like that?"

"I'll like it very much. And, Dara —"

"Yes?" I had my head turned towards the cave house; I thought — I was almost certain — that I could smell a delicious smell of baking cake . . . Dinah must have mixed it overnight, and given it a first touch in the "bain Marie"— which meant that it was a very rich and heavy cake. It must be, surely, the best she had ever . . .

"Dara — I mean to try and make you very happy, and keep you from all sorrow." Luke's voice was very low; I could hardly catch what he said.

"Thank you," I answered him, with the politeness that Lorraine had carefully instilled into me. I wanted to talk about the cake, but felt it would be better to wait for a minute. "Never change subjects abruptly," was one of my aunt's lessons.

"Miss Dara!" came a voice from the house, "I'm waiting to give you your clean dress."

The sun was up — it had sprung with a leap from the eastern sea, "coming forth as a bridegroom from his chamber"— and all the world was bright; and far, far out the tide that was to take my boy bridegroom away from me was already making towards the land.

" Go, Dara," said Luke. There was something a little disappointed in his tone; I did not understand it. But there was so much in those days that I did not understand.

I ran towards the house and left him, a strange, graceful figure of boyhood, the wind that had risen with the dawn stirring his dark hair, his blue eyes fixed upon the ship that lay far out at sea.

I found Dinah laying out on the bed my solitary white dress, a plain smock of linen, and the white canvas shoes and white cotton stockings that were kept for special occasions. I had always been in the habit of dressing myself, but to-day that was not permitted. Dinah slipped on and fastened my frock, laced my shoes, and tied my hair with a new white ribbon, softly shedding tears as she did so, and calling me a " lamb." She made me feel — I do not know why — as if I were a corpse, and she was preparing me for burial. The feeling was not in any way lessened — rather the reverse — when she produced a bridal wreath, which she had manufactured herself, with a hand too reminiscent of another kind of work. It was a large, fat circle of heavily scented white flowers, woven closely together round a ring of cane, and it looked as if the only thing it wanted were a ribbon with " R. I. P." on it.

This ornament she set upon my hair, deeply moved, as she did so, and wiping her eyes.

" Now, Miss Dara, you're done, and you make a lovely sight," she said. " Go and sit down in the dining room till Mr. Ivory comes, and don't go playing about; I wouldn't like to see you standing up there all decomposed."

I had not long to wait. They had already carried my father's chair into the Hall of Persephone; Mr. Ivory was there, looking up places in

books; Lorraine and Luke came in together, immediately after. Dinah delayed a little while in the kitchen, and this gave Lorraine time to undo some of her work.

"In Heaven's name, child," she said, snatching at my hair none too gently, "who put that graveyard thing on your head?" She was unfastening it as she spoke, and in another moment had thrown it out of the window. She glanced at my father uneasily. He only smiled in reply.

"My dear Lorraine, I'm not superstitious," he said. "It's you who see portents and omens. Don't start seeing any now, to put ideas in sensitive little heads."

"Well," said Lorraine, going closer to his chair. I know she did not mean me to hear her, but the echo in the Hall of Persephone was treacherous, "you remember on my — you remember *that* morning . . ."

"People can't help having funerals, my dear Lorraine; I suppose there were a score in town that day besides the one you happened to meet."

Lorraine said nothing more. She sighed a little, and glided away from my father's chair. Dinah now appeared from the kitchen, wearing a pious expression and an immense flat hat of prehistoric style. She carried in her hand a prayer book, wrapped in a clean handkerchief. She was, all too obviously, sucking strong peppermints — not, I think, because she liked them especially, but because they were in her mind associated with church. . . .

Old Ivory found his place and closed his book, leaving one finger in.

"Now, Luke and Dara, I am ready," he said; and we moved forward, I with an odd unpleasant feeling of having lessons to repeat and not knowing

a word of them. We stood in the light of the window embrasure, where the early sun was burning bright on the crystal pillars, and striking, in the old, wonderful way, prismatic lights of violet, red, and green from the hanging candelabra. I looked at Luke. He was amazingly pale, but very self-possessed. His new white suit, I thought, became him well . . .

There was a moment's pause; the sea, outside the window, struck angrily upon the sloping cliff — once — twice —

Then Ivory's voice arose:

" Dearly beloved, we are gathered together . . ."

. . . . . .

It was done; we rose to our feet, still holding hands, a little awkwardly. I think we were not quite sure what we ought to do next. The words of the ceremony, thundered out in Ivory's loudest Michael-Angelo-Moses style, had passed over my small head as the crashing northwest-season storms passed over the safe, low caves of Hiliwa Dara. The sentences I had repeated, bit by bit, seemed to me like a lesson — a Sunday lesson, with a flavor of Bible and boredom about it. Luke had said his part of the lesson oddly with a curious accent of earnestness, a quiver of feeling, that struck me as inexpressibly funny. There was one thing, and one thing only, about the ceremony that had moved me — the ring. It was no ugly plain band, but a pretty trinket of filigree gold and forget-me-nots, a delicate thing that I had been used to see hanging on my father's watch chain. I knew it had been my mother's; I knew, too, that he did not like to talk about it, else I had put in a claim for it long ago.

And to-day this ring was mine — tiny, exquisite,

just fitting my small third finger . . . She must have had little hands who wore it before me. Little hands, as I have known in later years, that could hold to nothing; not home; not peace, nor love, nor duty, nor even her baby child, nor, last of all, to life . . .

Her ring was mine; Luke had slipped it on my small, warm hand, speaking as he did so strange, serious words, dictated to him by the silver-bearded old prophet standing over us. It must be remembered that I had not, like most girl children, laughed with little companions over mock weddings, with veils reft from the window curtain, and tiny petticoated clergymen; I had never read the Marriage Service, nor been present at a wedding. The great, solemn words fell on my ear for the first time on the day when they were spoken, at Ivory's slow dictation, by my boy comrade, Luke.

As I have said, they passed over my head, and made but little impression. In after years, I remembered, I could have told things that I never knew I had heard or seen on that fateful morning. I could have told — ten years beyond that day — just how Ivory's voice rose up, sonorously, with the power of its long church training, into the shadowed vaults of the crystal roof above; how there was always a little pause before Luke's quiet tones replied; how I stumbled, and lost my way and was prompted right again; how Dinah, on her knees, wept straight from beginning to end; how Lorraine stood, as if in protest, tall and black, a blot upon the dazzling crystal light, and my father lay on his couch, watching, silent, strangely restful and content.

But on that morning I was clearly conscious of two things alone — that it was all very funny and a little boring, and that I had got a gold and blue

ring, which was to be mine to keep. Luke, at some signal from old Ivory, loosed my hand, bent over me from his sturdy height, and placed a cool, shy kiss upon my cheek. I kissed him back with a hurried peck, and held up my hand triumphantly.

"Doesn't it look lovely?" I said. "Ever so much nicer than your ring, Dinah."

Dinah, her large, blunt features swelled almost unrecognizably with crying, could only shake her head in reply. But my father, first looking at Ivory, as if he would say that there was another matter wanting attention, beckoned to Luke and myself.

"Dara," he said, when we were standing side by side at his couch, "I had a reason for giving you that ring, and no other. It isn't a wedding ring, as commonly used. But it is the one you will wear till you and Luke make your home together. And I want you both to promise solemnly that, until that time comes, you will not speak of what has been done to-day — to any one. There are very good reasons for keeping silent about it. You would be annoyed — made fun of — you would be made the butt of foolish, vulgar jokes. Most people, as you've yet to learn, are very vulgar-minded. For your own protection, I want that promise from both of you."

Old Ivory brought forward his large, black-bound, silver-clasped Bible.

"I don't think that's —" began father.

"Has it been in your experience," demanded Ivory, "that women generally can hold their tongues?"

Father was silent.

"Then let me have my own way about this," went on Ivory, accepting the silence as an answer. "I can hardly believe that a girl brought up as piously

as Dara has been would look lightly on an oath made upon the Holy Scriptures."

"No, no, I wouldn't," I assured him, answering the tone rather than the words; for it seemed to me that Mr. Ivory, somehow, was disapproving of something — I didn't know what — that I might be likely to do some day — I didn't know how or when. And I did not like being disapproved.

Old Ivory took my hand, not the one on which my new, beautiful ring was glittering, but the other, and laid it on the cover of the Book.

"Say after me," he dictated, "I solemnly promise, on this Holy Book, that I will not disclose, without the leave of my parent or my guardian, or until I reach the age of twenty-one, my marriage of to-day."

"Who is my guardian?" I asked curiously, after parroting the words.

A silence fell. Lorraine looked hastily at my father; my father looked at me, but nobody replied. Some one — I think it must have been Dinah — fetched a long, deep sigh, almost a groan.

"Here, Luke," said Ivory hurriedly.

Luke made his promise in the same words as myself, but added with perfect coolness a distinguishing clause of his own:

". . . Unless some serious necessity should arise."

"What is that for?" asked my father, a slight hint of dissatisfaction in his tone.

"Let it stand," said old Ivory. "The boy's a good boy; I can trust him. 'Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings . . .' Who knows but the Lord may have given him a warning?"

"There's one thing more," said father, feeling in his pocket; and I saw him turn very pale. He brought out something small and shining and handed it to Luke — slowly, as if he were loath to part with

it. "Keep that till it's wanted, my boy," he said, "and may it bring you more . . ." He broke off, and turned his head towards the shadows that lurked even in the broad daylight about the corners of the hall.

"Show me," I cried, as Luke was putting it away. He held it out without a word; and I saw that it was a ring — a small but heavy gold band, like the one that Dinah wore.

"I don't want that," I said, "you can keep it."

"I mean to," said Luke. There was something in his tone that impressed me, though I could not understand it. But I have known, long since, that in that moment Luke took up, boy that he was, the burden and the charge of my life. And thenceforward — I know, I know! — he never laid it down.

The feeling of tension that filled the air, and had begun to depress most of us, was broken in upon by Dinah.

"If any one feels like they can be eating of something," she said, in a voice thick with tears, "there's hot coffee and wedding cake in the kitchen, ready to come on. And sangwidges. Try and eat a little, Miss Hamilton, and you, sir, and Mr. Ivory, sir, and the young couple. God bless them. It's your duty to keep up."

"I want my cake," I declared.

"My lamb, you shall have it; Lord forbid I should grudge you anything to-day, or Mr. Luke, either, that's going across the salt seas, maybe never to come back," was Dinah's reply. Drying her eyes with her apron, she moved towards the kitchen.

Lorraine, always watching my father, poured out a cup of strong coffee as soon as the tray came in, and gave it to him. A little color came into his face

after he had drunk it. He lay back on his cushions silently looking at me. Busy, happy, and more excited than I had been at any time that day, I was hacking at the cake — my cake — with a large knife, and proudly distributing wedges. Father must have the biggest and the first. Luke helped next, but he passed his to Lorraine, out of politeness I thought. I gave him a royal wedge for himself after passing a share to old Ivory; but Luke looked at it, nibbled it, and put it down.

"What's the matter?" I asked him, my mouth impolitely full.

"Nothing, but I don't want to eat," he answered.

It appeared that nobody did. Old Ivory left his share on his plate untouched; presently he got up, and went off into his bedroom. Lorraine civilly crumbled, crumbled, and tested her portion. Father swallowed some, but it almost seemed to choke him. There had been talk at first, but shortly it died down, and left a silence in its place — a heavy silence, brooding like a cloud. It seemed as if every one were waiting for something to happen. In the silence the sea outside breathed hard, like a runner almost spent.

Father, always courteously mannered, was beginning to fill the awkward gap by some kind of speech, I know not what, when a long, low call, mounting to a moaning wail, broke in upon his words. We all — except father — sprang to our feet.

"*The Queen of the Islands,*" cried Luke, and instantly ran to old Ivory's room.

"She is early up to the wharf," said Lorraine, listening, her slight body bent towards the window for the second call of the great trumpet shell. It came, and was followed by a third.

"England is in a hurry," said father.

"I understand he always is. Don't get up, Arthur. If he comes, he won't expect . . . There's somebody!"

Her quick ears had caught the sound of an alien footstep crunching the coral gravel. I followed her out. It was not England. A sailor — a sturdy island man, lightly bearded — stood in the doorway.

"To Ariki (the Chief) say, give this bottle, tell them fair wind come, he wait twenty minute, then up sail," said the man. I stared at him, fascinated, remembering those other sailors who had laughed and run away, the last time England's schooner sailed into our anchorage. I knew they must be still on board. I wondered if we should see them . . .

Lorraine took the bottle. It was a fresh supply of medicine for my father, and wrapped round it was a typed paper from the doctor at Hawonga, giving minute directions for his treatment. My aunt read it quickly through and pocketed it.

"He is kind," she said, somewhat grudgingly.

"I think he is very, very kind, to remember all that for father," I told her. "Isn't he coming to see us, Lorraine?"

"Evidently not. Run quickly, Dara, and tell Luke he must be ready to go at once. There's no trifling with a fair wind at this time of the year."

Like all island dwellers, we were well versed in questions of weather. I knew as well as Lorraine that no captain could be expected to throw away a "slant" from the northwest towards June.

I ran to the central hall, my short skirts flying, and called loudly that the ship was going in a quarter of an hour. There was no one to be seen, save father, lying on his long chair; but I knew that Luke and Ivory could not be far away.

They were not. In another moment the door of

Ivory's room opened, and the old man came out, one hand on Luke's shoulder. Luke's face was set as I had seen it set, on the day when he had dived beyond the reef, to face the unknown terror of the depths outside. His brows — extraordinarily black and thick for a mere boy — were drawn in one straight line across his forehead; his mouth made another straight line, narrow as a cut, so tightly was it closed. Somehow, I knew that if he relaxed that tension, even for a moment, he would cry. But I knew, too, that he would not relax it.

"Good-by, Uncle Arthur," he said, using the friendly name that he had always given my father. He grasped the thin white hand that lay on the arm of the chair. My father took Luke's brown, young fingers in his, and held them.

"Good-by," he said. "It is good-by, Luke. God be with you, my boy, and God deal with you as you deal with my little girl, when I'm —" He did not finish. Luke wrung his hand, and left him.

"Are you coming to the boat, Dara?" he asked me, looking, not in my face, but elsewhere. I think the boy, young as he was and unaccustomed to emotion, was near to the breaking strain, in spite of his brave carriage.

"Yes, of —" I was beginning —.for indeed it seemed of course to me that I should come — when, suddenly, most unexpectedly, a storm of weeping seized me. I flung my hands over my face, with the old wild gesture that Lorraine had so often reproved. I shook from head to foot; I could not speak. I only cried and cried. The amazing, entertaining ceremony of the morning was over; the excitement of the ring and the cake were past. For the first time that day, I thought. And there was but one thought in my mind — that my boy comrade,

the partner of that strange solemnity of the morning — Luke, the other half of my childish life — was going away — not sometime, but this moment, now.

"Take her with you, Lorraine," said my father faintly. Lorraine looked at his pale face and blue-stained lips, saw that he could endure no further, and took my hand to lead me away. I broke away from her, and flung my arms round Luke's neck. I don't know what I said or did; I can only remember that old Ivory, kindly but determinedly, unwound my clinging hands, and with a brief adieu to Lorraine — spoken for Luke, who was speechless — hurried out with the boy through the great archway into the burning sun.

I left Lorraine with my father, ran to my room, and shut and bolted the door. And there, weeping, while alone, obstinately silent when any one came to the door and spoke to me, I passed the remainder of my wedding day.

CHAPTER VI

DO you remember that time in your life (I know you have had it, for the main web of every life is the same) when there came a period that, in retrospection, seemed to have been like one long afternoon?

There is a stir in the stillest morning; the stir, unheard, perhaps, yet felt, of the mounting day; of the rush that carries the world to the summit of noon. But when the sun declines, a languor falls; the long still hours file by with drooping heads and nerveless, folded wings. Sunset is far away; the full gold of daylight reigns, undiminished; no breath of evening chill knife-edges the soft airs that float and pass. Yet the decline of day, the hint of change, are there; the moments that mounted, mounted, begin to fall. As middle age dims, subtly, the life and beauty of the human face, though death be far away, the aging of the day pours sadness, drop by drop, into the beauty of the hours. And one sits and dreams, hands folded, and is sad, without knowing why. . . .

The days, the weeks that came after Luke's departure were all afternoon. Something was past; something had not yet come. The hours were long, and they verged towards no happy ending. My lessons had ceased; Lorraine was too much occupied with my father, in these days, to attend to me. She sat with him a great deal in the glittering coolness of Persephone's Hall, and they seemed to talk for hours; sometimes as I came in from one of my long

aimless rambles about the coral beach, or up Parnassus, I would catch a word or two as I entered, and it seemed that they had been disputing; sometimes Lorraine was sitting still and attentive, with a notebook on her knee and a pencil in her hand, writing down things that my father seemed to be telling. They always stopped when I came in, and my father always greeted me with some cheerful, joking word. Whatever their confidences were, it seemed clear that I was not to be admitted.

One day, when I came in tired and somewhat dispirited, with a bundle of lacy-white dead coral, and a huge petal-lipped trumpet shell that I did not want at all, but had picked up out of sheer idleness, I saw that Dinah was just leaving the hall, and that old Mr. Ivory, whom I had thought to be away among the cocoanuts, had apparently come out not a moment before. Lorraine, when I entered, was rolling up a large sheet of stiff paper, and tying it round with tape. There were ink and pens on the table, and a pepper castor full of the fine sand that we used instead of blotting paper.

"So you see," father was saying, "she is not dependent on him in any way; share and share alike is the — Oh, Dara, my child, I did not know you were there. Well, and where has the walk been today?"

"I went up Parnassus," I answered him. Lorraine finished rolling and tying the paper.

"The chest in your study?" she asked.

"Yes," said father. "Thank goodness, safes are superfluous in this house. Another advantage of the cave system. Well, girlie, and what did you see on Parnassus?"

"Nothing. No ships, father."

"You can't expect ships every day, my child.

And you know, they wouldn't bring Luke back if they came."

"I know they wouldn't; I want to see some ships, anyhow."

"Why?" asked father, looking at me with that expression of speculative interest that always silences a sensitive child.

"I don't know," I said, jumping off the table, where I had taken my seat, and gathering my bunch of coral together.

"I shall give this to Dinah; I don't want it," I said, marching out of the hall. I did not want to be questioned any further about my watch for ships.

Dinah was sitting under one of the big lamps that burned all day in her kitchen, reading the Bible. She raised her eyes when I came in.

"I stood there putrified when they told me," she stated.

"Who?"

"I felt for all the world as if a spectacle had rose from the tomb, and breathed cold upon my 'air. I said to Miss Lorraine —"

"When? What about?"

"I said, 'Miss Lorraine,' I said, 'I am always at your service,' I said, 'day or night,' I said. 'I devoted myself infernally to the services of Mr. Hamilton and yourself,' I said, 'when I came to these savage places,' I said, 'and —'."

"What did she want?" I cried impatiently.

"She wanted," said Dinah, coming down to earth, "for me to sign my name, in witness whereof, the testator being of sound mind. And I done it."

"Has my father been making a will?"

"A last will and testament," said Dinah relishingly.

"Is he worse?" I asked, my breath coming suddenly short.

Dinah staunched her eyes with a huge clean pocket handkerchief, and said nothing.

"It's as ill to see you cry as to see a goose go barefoot," I quoted witheringly, with an ugly little pain at my heart. "I don't believe Dad's worse. He looks just the same."

"The island," said Dinah, "has been left half of it to you and half of it to Mr. Luke, independent of each other, because the fact that come in after the time I was married allows of that, though in my coverlet, as the lawyers calls it, what was mine was his, and well he let me know it. Miss Lorraine, she told me, because, says she, there will be only you and me some day that knows about it, and —"

There had been no sound. There was not so much as a draught from the door to warn me, as I stood beside Dinah, back turned towards the kitchen entrance. But suddenly, in the midst of her speech, I swung round as if something or some one had called to me. Tall, silent, hawk-faced, self-possessed, Captain England stood in the doorway.

Dinah, turning to see what had disturbed me, sprang to her feet.

"Lord, sir," she fluttered, with a hand on her stomach, where I think she supposed her heart to be, "you did give me a turn. Is Master Luke all right, sir?"

"I left him at Port Hervey, with the steamer due in twelve hours," answered Captain England. "Where is Mr. Hamilton, if you please?"

It seemed strange to me that he could have missed the Hall of Persephone, since he had already been shown the way to it; but I reflected that he must have heard our voices, and followed the sound.

" I'll take you," I said, deserting Dinah, and leading the way. " How did you ever come in without my seeing you this morning? "

" I should suppose," said Captain England, " that the *Queen* was under the lee of the headland. Wait a minute, please; I have something to bring in from outside."

I waited, in the central hall, by the great sunk fireplace, with the tall iron dogs, where we burned our driftwood fires of nights. It seemed to me that Captain England was, to-day, another man than the man I had seen, once before. There was something about him indefinitely unapproachable. . . .

He came in from outside almost at once, carrying in his arms a limp, fat bundle, that exuded arms and legs at inappropriate points. The bundle smelt of whiskey, and it grunted.

" Show me to your father," he said with perfect calmness. The bundle kicked. He shook it, slightly, as it seemed, but I could almost hear the bones of the creature rattle together.

" Quit! " was all he said; a word like a bullet. The bundle became still.

Led by myself, in a state of dumb amazement, he entered Persephone's Hall, where Lorraine and father were seated close together, talking earnestly. They broke off into I know not what exclamations. Harry England, carrying his bundle as lightly as a woman carries her baby, stepped to the table, and shook down on its surface a fat, bloated, red-faced man in a khaki suit. The man tumbled flat, and lay staring at the ceiling.

" Give him a cup of black coffee, and call me as soon as he gets his senses back. He's the best doctor in the Hawongas, but he soaks once in a way. He wouldn't come with me, so I took him," ob-

served England, in a level, well-bred voice. "Will you kindly excuse me? I must see to the landing of the cargo. I brought your usual stuff. You can pay me what you paid the Harkness Brothers for it. They're down."

"Harkness? What has happened to them?" cried my father, as England was leaving. Harkness was an old-fashioned little firm of Port Hervey, which had handled our shipping business for years.

"I fancy I have," replied England, and went out.

"What does it mean?" asked father of the empty air.

"I have heard," said Lorraine, putting papers away, "that he harasses and breaks small firms whenever he can, by any means, legitimate or not. He is ruthless when it's a question of money. He ought to be a rich man some day."

"I don't much care to have that sort of —" began my father, and then his eyes fell on what I think we had all forgotten for the moment, the drunken yet, oddly, not quite disreputable, figure on the table. You could see, when you looked closely, that the man, if sober, would be a gentleman; you guessed that he was no fool. . . .

Father broke off his sentence.

"It was extraordinarily kind," he said uneasily.

"It is the one thing I would have prayed for," said Lorraine, her eyes glowing like the driftwood flames at evening. "Arthur, we shall be able to give you every chance now."

My father smiled a little, and sighed a little. I could not read his meaning, but Lorraine did, and contradicted it.

"You are wrong, I'm sure," she said. "There's always hope while there's — I must go and see about

that coffee. The sooner we get him round the better."

She glided away. Father and I, alone, sat looking, fascinated, at the sleeping figure on the table.

"Captain England has been good to you, Dad," I said. "I will give him something. I will give him — what can I give him, father?"

"That is like you, little girl — you are a true Wednesday's child, loving and giving. . . . Wednesday was your birthday. . . . Lorraine's was Friday. It seems at times almost as if there were something in those old . . . Well, you can give him one of your books, if you wish. That can harm nobody," he said, as if to himself.

"He ran to get that medicine for you — Oh, father, he ran," I said. "It made me think of my history lesson with Lorraine, and how they said that Henry the Fifth — Prince Hal, you know — could run so fast that he would take his lords with him, and run down a red deer by his own speed, his lords driving it towards him, which thing, the book said, no other man, king or subject, in his realm, might do."

Father looked at me strangely. I think he was going to speak, but he said nothing.

Some one else did, however. The drunken man on the table — who, I think, must have been more confused and shaken than actually intoxicated — suddenly opened his mouth and spoke.

"Harry England," he said, "Harry England. What the devil! Harry the Fifth. Direct line, but wrong side of the —"

"Hold your tongue!" said my father, sharply and suddenly.

The man on the table sat up and blinked.

"How did I come here?" he asked.

"You came in the *Queen of the Islands,*" replied my father. "May I offer you a chair? You can hardly be comfortable there."

The man sat blinking for a moment or two, and then, with a sudden activity that surprised me, nipped off the table. He was a stout fellow, with a disproportionately large head, and an amazingly thick mat of brown hair. He had an immense nose and an ugly mouth, and his ears projected like jug handles. His chin was unshaven and bristly, and there was a boiled-crab look about his big brown eyes, which nevertheless were kindly in expression.

He made a curious clucking noise with his mouth, as if he were trying to taste something; pulled out his tongue with his fingers so that he could look at the tip, and felt his pulse.

"Hocussed — hocussed, and shanghaied, by Gad!" he said. Then he dropped into a chair — which he seemed to need — and burst out laughing.

"Harry England," he observed, "is the devil. May I ask your name?"

"Arthur Hamilton," answered my father. "May I ask yours?"

"So this is Hiliwa Dara Island? Well, well, well. . . . I'm Dr. Blackburn from Port Hervey; and very much against my will from Port Hervey, I can assure you. But we'll talk of that — Have you any black coffee?"

It was entering the room at the moment, carried by Lorraine. I think he must have smelt it. He fairly fell upon the tray, and drank the best part of a jugful.

"That does me good," he sighed. "Now if one had just a — It's you, you villain, you shanghaier, you kidnapper and eloper, is it? What have you to say for yourself?"

England was in the room. I do not know when he had come in. He made no answer at all to the doctor, but handed him a glass with a stiff dose of whiskey and sparklet in it. He seemed to have had no difficulty in finding my father's stores.

Blackburn drank, and lay back in his chair. We all saw — with some astonishment, I think — that he had accepted the situation calmly. We were quite as much astonished to see that Captain England had, seemingly, no apology to offer. We did not know, in those days, how far removed from any attitude of mind represented by apologies was the stuff of England's character.

" I have never done anything I did not choose to do, or that I would have undone," he said, in years after, to one I knew.

Father, I could see, was in an embarrassing position. He wanted to express his regrets to Dr. Blackburn; but he could not do so in the face of the man who had brought Blackburn forcibly to the island. He wanted to thank England, but he could not thank him before the shanghaied doctor. Under the circumstances, he fell back on generalities as his only refuge.

" I am very glad to see you here," he said to the doctor. " I assure you you will not be permitted to lose by your visit, if it has been inconvenient to you to come."

" Damned inconvenient," said Blackburn cheerfully. " I depend on having my two-monthly drunk, and it upsets me when I don't. It's the time now, and I was just getting under way, when — How long have you had it? "

" What? " asked father in some bewilderment at the rapid change of subject. But Lorraine saw.

She slipped my hand into hers, and led me, unwilling, away.

"Come to my room," she said, as the door closed behind us. "The doctor is going to talk to your father."

. . . . . .

Night came. The driftwood fire was lighted in the hall; smalt blue and celadon green the little flames burned up, as they had burned on every night of my life that I remembered. The great archway, when the fire died down, grew velvet-dark again. The sea crept up the beach, not far away, with a sound as of the ringing of a myriad porcelain bells. It always sounded like that, when there was a full high tide, and the drifts of tinkling coral were lifted and swept in. Cool airs, full of salt and weed and the wet-moss smell of the reef, flowed in from the archway; the sand, near the driftwood fire, felt warm to my bare feet; a few yards farther away, it was cold — cold as I imagined that snow to be which I had never seen. My father was not there, but Lorraine and Dinah occupied their places, and old Ivory, on his seaweed-cushioned chair, sat working away at fish nets, as he always did of nights. And the fire roared when the wind came down the tunnel, and in the dark outside, the mopokes called. It was all as it had been, all as it always would be. Luke was away, but he would return. Father would get well now that the doctor had come.

Lying in the fire-warmed sand, my sleepy eyes on the flame, I felt, without words, that the world had come right again. And the forever-and-ever feeling of childhood, the bulwark of sand that rears itself, in mimicry of solid stone, between young souls

and the gulfs of change and Time, stood up to tip the stars.

So I lay till it was my bedtime; and the doctor did not come out, nor did Captain England. At last Lorraine beckoned to me, and reluctant, sleepy, but lapped in peaceful sureness of things past, present, and to come, I dragged my feet to the door of the room where the red and ivory shell lamp had watched above my sleeping for all the nights that I knew — where it was never, never to watch me so again. And I closed the door on the great cave hall, filled with shadow and with firelight, and on the group about the fire, which had been my last sight every evening since first I could remember, but which I, and Time, were never to see there more. . . .

. . . . . .

I cannot tell how it was that I did not wake. There must have been noise and movement during the night, and I was not, commonly, the heaviest of sleepers. Perhaps the excitement of the schooner call — of all things most exciting and exhausting to an island dweller — had tired me out. Perhaps some kind Fate kept finger on my eyes. Certain it is that I slept sound as the small green parrots slept, in their nests among the dark mango trees outside; sound as the great sea cows that snored on the lonely beaches at the back of the island — until half the night was past. Then, suddenly, I woke.

Something had called me back from the depths of sleep. It was no mystic voice or vision; that, had it come, should have come long hours before. It was the sound of some one crying. Not Dinah. I do not think that tears of Dinah's would have waked me from the lightest noonday doze; as I had said

to her, " It was no sadder to see her cry than to see a goose go barefoot " . . . It was what I had never heard before, the voice of another woman raised in loud, terrible sobbing. And I knew, impossible as it seemed, that it could be none but Lorraine.

I cannot account for the mood that took me. I never said to myself — I did not even whisper to the depths of my soul — what I knew the cry to mean. I got out of bed, slipped on the few clothes that I wore in daytime, plaited and tied back my hair. I tried to wash and brush my teeth, but I found, oddly, that I was shivering all over as if I were cold, and that things were slipping from my hands; so I dashed a little water in my face, buckled my belt, and slipped out.

The cave hall was very dark indeed; not an ember showed in the sunk fireplace; not a flicker of foam light came through the outer arch. The sea was black and still, save for the low deep breathing that never ceases, night and day and year and century through, on a Pacific coast. All the doors about the hall were closed. I stood in the middle, not knowing where to go. I was not frightened — not yet — but my knees kept trying to double up under me like old Ivory's folding rule, and the shaking of my hands grew worse. And it seemed cold, in the depths of that tropic night.

Then, as I stood there, not afraid, but strangely unwilling to move (for who knew what horror might not leap out at me if I showed that I was there?) I saw a light come gradually round a corner, and the drunken doctor appeared, all alone, and carrying a hurricane lamp. He was not drunk now, but he looked sick and rather sad, and tired exceedingly. When he saw me, he gave such a jump that the sand spurted up about his feet.

" My God! " he said, coming up to me, " it's the little girl."

I looked at him, and shook more than ever, and I could not say a word.

. . . Blackburn is dead. He died not long after, a shameful death, and his memory, in the island world, has no sweet savor. But I shall always remember him with kindness; if I were one of those who pray for the dead, I am sure I should pray for him.

He had had a wife, once, and children, years ago. He had not forgotten how to deal with a frightened child. He set down his lamp, put his warm arm round my small, shivering body, and drew me to him.

" The poor wee lassie," he said; and again, " The poor wee lassie." And in those words he told me all.

The shriek that I sent up tore the roof.

" Father! " I screamed; and even while the name left my lips, knew, with the stabbing knowledge that comes to us in these awful moments, that I should never say that word again, save as a meaningless cry. There was no longer any such name for me. There was no such thing as father in the empty world.

Behind the closed door of Lorraine's bedroom, her monotonous sobbing, that had waked me up, began again. And for the first time in all my life, when I flung myself screaming on the ground, in a fit of the hysterical abandonment that had hitherto been the crime of crimes, no one rebuked me or interfered. The drunken doctor, who was so sober now, stood beside me, lantern set in the sand, and just waited. Through all my wild passion, I could feel his steady, kindly eyes fixed on me — waiting.

They did their work at last. I sat up, and stared about me, shivering and sick.

"Everything was done for him that could be done. He did not wish you called," said Blackburn, slowly and gently. "He went easily, and didn't suffer a bit." (It was years before I recognized the kindly lie that he had told.) "You don't want to see him." I realized that I did not — I trembled at the thought. "You are going to join your aunt, and stay with her till morning — Not your aunt? Then Dinah. She has finished. . . . She is somewhere about; I'll find her."

He did. In a minute or two, strong hands lifted me from the ground and carried me away, and until dawn the loyal servant woman and I wept in each other's arms. But Lorraine, locked in with her grief, saw and spoke to no one.

With daylight came Harry England, and a new sorrow.

Those who have lived in the island world will understand readily the necessity that now fell upon us of putting aside our grief, of taking up the ordinary work of daylight, and acting as if no disaster had fallen in the night upon Hiliwa Dara. They know what it means in the "schooner islands" to have a ship ready and waiting, and no prospect of another for months to come. It had long been arranged between my father and Lorraine that she was to take me to the Hawongas as soon as the inevitable end had come, Dinah remaining on for a little while to see to the comforts of old Ivory — who, though I have not mentioned it, was daily showing more and more the signs of his great age. And now the end had come indeed, suddenly, as all but myself had known it would, but lightened, at least, by everything that science could do. And the opportunity of reaching the Hawongas was here, but it would not stay. England declared that it had

already cost him a good deal to come out of his usual way so far, and that he could not promise to stay over another tide. If Lorraine and I were to take passage with him for Port Hervey, we must be ready by sundown. There was no valid reason why this should not be. In the island world, with its fierce heats and torrential rains, no corpse is kept above ground longer than a few hours necessary for the preparing of the grave. Our packing was light, and there were two women to do it. The convent school in Port Hervey was ready to take me at any time. There could be no dispute about the matter; Lorraine and I must go.

I went through the day in a dream; in one of those dreadful dreams that we pray to wake from, when they find us in the world of sleep; that we struggle against, and try to believe dreams indeed, when they darken the sunlight of our real, living days. Lorraine, cruelly as I thought then, kindly, I realize now, made me help with the packing and sorting of my clothes. She herself worked without tears, without rest, almost without speech. She had had her terrible hour, and put her sorrow, for the moment, out of sight. I have never — it may have been my fault — have never loved Lorraine, but I cannot deny her courage, so high, so certain, so far, always, beyond mine. . . .

In the afternoon, when all the work was done, a hush fell suddenly upon the cave house of Hiliwa Dara, and old Ivory, who had been away all morning in the carpenter's shop, returned. He carried something into my father's room; he was followed by two or three of our plantation boys. Later, the boys came out, a long black-covered burden in their arms; and I clung to Dinah, who was kneeling in the sand, and cried and cried again. She loosed my

hands presently, and, with Lorraine, went out after the black burden into the cruel sunlight. But the drunken doctor — smelling now of the whiskey that was kept on the guests' shelf in Persephone's Hall — stayed with me, and said never a word, but let me cry all I would. . . .

There was no formal meal that night. Dinah, in her element now, if never before, went round from one person to another carrying trays of sandwiches, coffee, soup, pieces of hot pie — Heaven knows how she found the time to make it — and begging every one to eat and drink and "keep up." She even administered Bovril to Harry England, with a tender hand, as if he had been overcome with grief for the man he had seen but twice, and asked him if he could fancy anything solid to eat. . . .

"A plate of beef, if you please, and a bottle of beer," was his answer. I do not know how he knew we had beef; it is not a matter of course, in any island dwelling. As it happened, Ivory had killed, a day before.

"I shall have to run the ship to-night," he added; it was as near an apology as anything one ever heard him say.

Dinah brought the food and set it on a stool; she seemed resolved to lay no tables that night. Often since then, it has come to my mind that she acted with purpose, and with the kindliest of thoughts. What a "last meal" at Hiliwa Dara would have been to Lorraine and to me, I scarcely dare to think. She saved us from it.

The drunken doctor, getting more and more uncertain in his words and actions, but always thoughtful for me, sat near me, and persuaded me to eat.

"'S long way to go," he warned me. "Thash a big win' gettin' up. All right with Harry Eng-

land — take his ship anywhere, any sht — sht — shtorm. But iss' long way. You eat something."

England finished his meal quickly; he never seemed to take any especial pleasure in food, even when, as now, he had fasted for the best part of twenty-four hours.

"Are you ready?" he said to Lorraine. She bowed in reply. I have no doubt she found it difficult to speak. It was quite dark now, and the plantation boys were waiting at the archway to carry our goods away. Old Ivory — how much aged, in this one day and night — came, stooping, from an inner room, and began to give orders.

"Good-by, my lamb," sobbed Dinah. "Please Heaven, we'll meet again; and be sure, Miss Dara, to put dry clothes on when you get wet, and don't neglect your vittles, my lamb, for you're getting as thin as a beadle-nut tree, so take care of yourself, and let me see you quite infatuated when I come to you and Miss Lorraine."

The wind had indeed been rising; it blew hard in my face as Lorraine and I went down the walk together; the stars were gone, and the newly risen moon raced hard for her life through wolf packs of pursuing cloud.

"Thank God it's dark," said Lorraine, drawing her cloak close round her. "To leave in the daylight" . . . She shuddered; and not with cold.

Beyond the jetty, rocking wildly on the swells that burst over the reef, lay at anchor the *Queen of the Islands*. Her riding lamps made zigzag lightnings in the water; she pulled at her cables like a furious horse at his halter. Now and again her stern rose and fell, with a sound like a giant throwing colossal buckets of water on a marble floor.

The smell of copra, oily and nutty, and charged,

to us islanders, with the very spirit of ships and sea, blew from the hold as our whaleboat shoved off. For a moment my spirits rose; for a moment, I forgot that father was lying, alone, underneath the palms, and remembered only that I had longed above everything to see the *Queen of the Islands,* dreamed, as one dreams impossible things, of traveling somewhere in the wonderful, wicked ship. . . . Then the cloud came down again, and I climbed the Jacob's ladder in a trance of tired misery, only half understanding what I saw and heard. I remember that we went across a heaving deck (well was it for us that we were island bred, and accustomed to the violent ways of cutters and ketches) down a companion, and into a white saloon with swinging lamps. An island youth, dressed in the royal blue jumper and loin cloth that were England's uniform, showed us a little cabin with a berth and a cushioned locker. Almost before we had time to realize our surroundings, the loud song of the anchor chains burst forth, and all the ship was filled with their roaring chorus, and with the cries of the brown man who ran the winches round. The great sails rose with thunderous slatting of canvas. Suddenly the clamor died, the ship leaned over — over — as if she would swing her lee rail underneath; chatter, chatter went the sea along her side, under the bulkhead of our cabin. A new, cold air blew in from the saloon doorway. We were away; and the life at Hiliwa Dara had ended.

. . . . . .

It was a terrible night. Captain England had known it would be; for that reason, and not on account of the tides, he had hurried us away, wishing to get through the dangerous bars of reef that surrounded the island before the worst of the storm

should break. Once we were out from under the lee of Hiliwa Dara — and swept by those huge wings, and by the fierce will of our captain, we cleared the land all too soon — our ship fell into the maw of the ravening seas, like a butterfly seized by a shark. Less chance than the butterfly she seemed to have, through the first hours of the storm. It blew half a hurricane that night.

Hour after hour, clinging, tossed and bruised, to the seats of the cabin, we heard the seas bursting on the deck above, with a sound as if a thousand carts of paving stones had been cast down; we felt the wild leaping and staggering of the ship, driven by the hounds of the storm. Long since, the hatches had been closed and the outer air cut off; we stifled in our little cabin. Lorraine and I crept out, at last, clawing and holding on, into the saloon; at least, there was air to breathe there. . . .

I think the storm must have gone down a little about then; it was morning, but we did not know, for the deadlights were screwed home, and the cover was on the skylight. The noise was still appalling; we did not hear the sound of the companion hatch, quickly opened and closed by England. It was not until we saw his tall figure bending swiftly down to come in, against a background of pale, angry dawn, that we knew the day had come.

He shut the hatch again, shutting out with it the sudden increase of sea thunder that had followed him in. The dark steward in the royal blue jumper and loin cloth popped up like a demon in a pantomime out of the lazaretto; he had come from the galley by a door reserved for bad weather. He brought the coffee, which on every ship is served at six o'clock. England drank his, standing; he seemed as much at home on the reeling floor as if he had

been the center of the world; the one firm point round which all chaos circled. Lorraine and I, wedged into corners with pillows, snatched and saved and sipped, and spilled half our cupfuls about the settees.

"Rather a dirty night," said England, "but things are quieting down; we've run across the tail end of it, about. I can take you on deck now if you like."

Lorraine refused; she said she would rather try to sleep and she did not think she could stand, in any case.

"Dara will come; I'll carry her," pronounced the captain; and I would as soon have thought of objecting as of leaping into the fierce seas that beat outside, though in truth, I had rather by far have stayed down in the cabin with Lorraine.

He took a coat from a nail where it had been swinging furiously all night, wrapped it round me, and brought me out, carrying me in the bend of one elbow as if I had been a kitten. I clung to him when the cold gale struck my cheek; it seemed as if the whole world, outside there, was reeling and dancing, almost standing on its head. His face, sea-beaten to brown leather, lean, lit by dark, sparkling eyes under eyebrows like strips of black fur, touched mine as the ship made a furious leap.

"Oh, you are as hard as wood!" I cried, astonished.

"As hard as harder things than that," said Harry England, dropping me into the nest he had prepared — a chair lashed tight to the deckhouse. He secured a bit of Manila rope across me as I sat. His hands were wonderfully capable and gentle.

"Did you ever kill a man?" I broke forth. I had heard strange things about this sailor, from folk

on passing ships; and my nerves were too completely relaxed by the wild night for any of the ordinary restraints of "manners" to control my speech.

"I should do so, if I had to," said Harry England — which, when one came to think of it, was no answer at all. "I do what I have to. I have to make you comfortable now. A pillow — put your head back. Now you are to sleep in the fresh air. Don't let me find you with your eyes open until eight bells."

I was so much in awe of him that I closed my eyes at once, and only ventured to peep beneath my eyelashes, later on, when I heard his voice — England had an amazing voice; I do not think that he had ever sung a note, but it had all the compass and power of the greatest singing voices — calling out an order at the far end of the ship.

He was standing in the bows, rising and falling fearfully with the ship's motion, and looking up at some one on the foremast. I followed his glance, and saw a sailor, barefooted, trousered, clinging to a yard that was so high up it looked like a walking stick. The sailor had something like a long dark rope flying loose behind. I realized that it — she — was one of Harry England's famous women A.B's.

"She is coming down," I said to myself excitedly. She was.

Lightly as a cat — indeed, no cat could have followed where she clung — she slid down a stay, caught the shrouds, backed swiftly, leaped to the deck. Another girl so like herself as to look almost a sister, followed her. They were handsome creatures, pale brown in color, with the immense dark eyes of the Polynesian girl, and the long rich hair that one finds nowhere west of Samoa. They

had full figures, clearly outlined beneath their thin cotton shirts, and one could see the swell of the arm muscles, displayed by the rolled-up sleeves, and the hard calf and thigh, under the trousers, strong as a man's, yet graceful as a woman's. I have never seen two more splendid human beings.

Other sailors were busy about the decks, clearing up the damage caused by the half hurricane of the night; but I had eyes for none of them, I was fascinated by the island girls. One of them came over to me, on her way to belay a length of rope, and laughed at me as I sat tied in my chair. She said something in island Maori — the common language of the Pacific — about the " Pretty little white girl."

The captain launched a blast of orders at her, couched, not in island Maori, but some local dialect which I did not understand. She made a face, and moved on, and I, literally trembling lest he should find out that I had opened my eyes, after all, closed them again so tight, that, being tired, I slept.

When I woke, the sun was high up in the heavens, the sea was almost calm, and far away on the horizon, distant yet a full day's sailing, afloat like pale blue clouds, I saw the peaks of distant mountains — the unknown hills of Hawonga.

CHAPTER VII

HAWONGA is a Love Island.

There are a good many such islands in the South Seas, though, naturally, they are not marked as such on the map. A Love Island is a place where nobody has much to do; where the climate is enervating and soft, the soil fertile, and the natives, men and women, very good to look at. In such an island, the chief occupation of every one, white, brown, and half-caste, is love-making. People keep stores, keep hotels, go trading about the coasts, grow fruit for market, and dry copra once in a way, but these things are not their interest in life, their reason for continuing to live. That is to be found in the dances that fill up half the nights; in the picnic parties that pass continually, whaleboat carried, up and down the ever placid waters of the lagoons; in the hot afternoons when stores are shut, and hotels left to run themselves, and every one under forty years of age goes off to sit beneath a fern-shaded waterfall, side by side with her, or him, or more frequently, with them. . . . If the waterfall is small, you, and she, and they, go and sit where it can run, deliciously, down a sun-scorched back, for an hour or so at a time. If it is large, you tie a " pareo " about you, let down your hair (supposing that you are one of the many island beauties, tea-colored, coffee-colored, or perhaps merely color of cream) wreathe your head with ropes of white, scented flowers, and, shrieking with joy and fear, leap over the rail. And when the sunset comes, you being a trader or store-

keeper or official may, perhaps, wander home, arm in arm with the cream-colored girl who has your heart and your credit at the store; or you may build a fire in a pit of stones, and, with her and her friends, cook your evening meal beneath the stars, and afterwards join in the wild island dances that Cook and his sailors saw, and Bligh of the "Bounty" forbade his men to join in, lest they should do that which indeed they did, eat of the lotus fruit, and never wish to leave the islands any more. And you will sleep where you fall, underneath the stars and the star-shaped shadows of the palms. And next day, because the store or the plantation, or the hotel seems a weariness to you, you will not go back to it, but will make a forest picnic away to the place where the wild "fei" fruit and the oranges are ripe, and seven other men as young and good to see as you yourself, and seven and twenty island girls who never have anything at all to do will go too, and there will be singing and dancing, and sharing of wild doves, the which must be done, according to immemorial custom, by twos and twos; and nobody at all will go home, or go to work, until they feel the forest, and the fei, and the snaring of the wild turtledoves by the tame ones have, for the time, grown wearisome. So back to the sleepy town. . . .

Hardly need I say that this was not my view of Hawonga, nor my part in it. I lived in a little, pretty house on the main street — a house with plaited bamboo walls, and deep thatched roof, and a flood of bougainvillæa tossing wine-red waves of flowers all over the surrounding fences. Lorraine lived there too; and Dinah — released from Hiliwa Dara Island by the death of old Ivory, which took place soon after Lorraine and I went away — lived

with us, as cook, nurse, housekeeper, ladies' maid, and chaperon.

The convent school, one of the best in the whole Pacific, which was no doubt my father's reason for selecting the Hawongas — stood a little way down the street, under an arcade of scarlet-flowered poinciana trees. A pathway of white coral led to the door. Morning after morning, in the years that came after Hiliwa Dara days, I trod that pathway in my pretty white frocks and dainty shoes (for I was always well dressed, as became the little heiress of Hiliwa Dara), a native girl following behind me, to carry my books and music, Dinah following last of all, to see that nobody spoke to me or annoyed me, and that the native girl was not, as she put it, up to any of her tricks. . . . Dinah's opinion of the natives of this Love Island, one and all, went almost beyond expression, and was mostly confined to head-shakings and turning up of eyes. Occasionally she burst forth, as on one memorable Sunday, when she was escorting me to the little Anglican mission church, and met, tearing through the town full blast like the very rout of Pan, a horseback picnic of nymphs who had only too clearly been bathing, and had not stopped to dress — at least, not enough to satisfy the Puritan conscience of my maid.

"This town," she said, "is running over with immortality, and if fire and grindstones don't come down from heaven to destroy them, then I don't believe there never was any cities of the plain. I expect Port Hervey is worse than any of them, anyhow, because if plain people could be carrying on to that extent, much more so, Miss Dara, people that their Creator has made as wickedly good looking as them hussies. Don't you ever forget that beauty is a deceitful and dangerous thing — in case you should

grow up good looking," she added carefully, with a view to the mortifying of youthful vanity.

Of course I knew, even at fourteen, that I was pretty. I could scarcely have missed knowing it, in the Hawongas, though I spent most of my day in the convent, where the pale shadowy Sisters lectured me and the other white pupils (kept rigidly apart from " colored " girls), on modesty, humility, and other gentle virtues that could not be expected to spring up, unaided, in the enervating atmosphere of these southern lotus lands. If Dinah guarded me like a dragon, as she did, on the walk to school and back; if Lorraine sifted my acquaintance, and resifted it, till I was scarcely allowed to attend a children's party at the Residency; if showiness was strictly discouraged in the good, expensive clothes I wore, and ornaments forbidden, though I had more jewelry of my own than any young girl on the island — still, Nature found ways to whisper in my ear the secret that every fair woman in the making knows. Dinah and Lorraine could put no embargo upon glances; they could not prevent my exulting in the fact that no young girl at the Residency parties ever got a partner until my card was filled; they could not stop enamored lads from flinging chocolates in at my window, when every one was busy at the other side of the house, or stifle the low, soft singing of island songs, that sounded sometimes, of dark, starry nights, when road and fence and garden were veiled by the kindly dusk that comes so swiftly and so happily for lovers, in these Isles of Love.

So it came that I did not pay quite so much attention to my books as the good Sisters would have wished, and that after a while, as I began to grow up in earnest, and found myself, all of a sudden, a real young woman of sixteen, with hair up and frocks

down, I spent much time at the looking-glass, and more still with the shelf of standard poets that hung in Lorraine's own room, and that she could not well deny me, since they were her own favorite reading. Lorraine, I fancy, had narrowly missed attaining to the laurel crown that my father longed for, yet knew far out of reach. I have some fragments of her poetry, to-day, that might well have brought her fame — had they been smoothed down to the perfection they were capable of, or even finished.

She read almost nothing but poetry. But with her, it was an avenue to the past. With me, it was a golden, flower-strewn, mysterious road, leading I knew not whither. I lived on " Romeo and Juliet " for months. I acted it to myself, late in my own room. I mused on the strange similarity of fates, both married as mere children — only I, I reflected proudly, had beaten Juliet by two years. . . .

Another year went by. No one knew of the ceremony, now five years old, in the cave house of Hiliwa Dara. No one ever spoke to me of it. Lorraine, I sensed, somehow, to be inexplicably hostile to it in her secret mind. Dinah — I knew afterwards — had promised old Ivory that she would not talk to me about the matter; and a promise made to a dying man was, in her estimation, so sacred that one could not even mention it, other than by head-shakings and signs.

During these years, I had heard constantly and regularly from Luke. He wrote from his school to tell me of his boyish successes in class, in cricket and football, in the great national sport of Australia, swimming. He wrote, also, with candor, of the scrapes he got into from time to time, which interested me much more, as they seemed to bring the once ever-perfect Luke nearer to my unsatisfactory

self. When Ivory died, the guardianship of the boy and his property was passed on, by previous arrangement, to the headmaster of the school who, I think, understood Luke's peculiar nature somewhat better than his own relations had done, since he gave the lad an amazing amount of freedom and left him, at eighteen, practically his own guardian, with a large allowance, and perfect liberty to choose his own way of life.

Luke chose to go to an agricultural college. Hiliwa Dara was doing well, under its paid manager, but he was certain, he told me, that he could make it do definitely better by and by; he hinted mysteriously at wonderful possibilities, suspected by no one but himself. He meant to take a year at the college, he told me, and — afterwards another year at a School of Mines. Then, he said, he would be twenty, and I should be eighteen, and we might make our home on Hiliwa Dara Island together. He sent me, with the letter, a beautiful set of aquamarines — brooch, necklet, bracelet, ring, and screw-on earrings. It was the first time that he had referred, openly, to the bond existing between us; and he spoke of it more as if it were an ordinary engagement than anything else. This was due — had I known it — to a certain delicate consideration for my feelings; but I took it otherwise. I was past the romantic Romeo and Juliet stage, when I had gazed on his photograph, and addressed speeches to it in the moonlight. I had come to think of men — white men, young men — as rather silly creatures, who were always wanting to make love to one, and to send one presents which Lorraine would never let one accept. I was, in my own opinion, exceedingly grown up, and full of hard common sense — of which, I think, I had in reality no more than a sea

anemone has feathers. Nobody, so far as I could hear, had ever been married at twelve years of age; the very youngest bride that the islands had known was sixteen when she went to the altar. I had once, tentatively, asked her if she could have been married younger, and she said certainly not; nobody could be married younger than sixteen; there were laws against it. When I asked her what they were, she shook her head patronizingly (it was only six weeks since she had coiled her schoolgirl pigtail into a knot on the nape of her neck) and said that they were laws meant for people's protection, so that nobody could run away with you; that was all she knew about it, but was certain they were true, for her husband was a lawyer, and he had had a case about something of the sort.

Not quite satisfied, I tried yet again. I asked another married woman — an old one this time — if she had ever heard of any girl being married at twelve; and cited the cases of Mrs. Edgar Allan Poe, thirteen; Mrs. Mayne Reid, thirteen also, and (Heaven save me!) Juliet, fourteen, as all the world knew.

The old lady laughed.

"Those were Americans"— she said; "if it ever happened — and American marriages aren't like any others; they make them and break them for fun. . . . And Juliet, you know, my dear, was just made up by Shakespeare. Nobody marries at those absurd ages but natives."

She could not have said anything that would have mortified me more; I had to the full the racial pride of the white girl reared among colored people. I made up my mind that the whole thing had been a freak of father's and Mr. Ivory's. I wore Luke's jewels — Lorraine, who was always just, however

strict she might be, permitted me, somewhat grudgingly, to put them on occasionally — but I regarded them much as I regarded the boxes of chocolates that used to be thrown through my window, and the other, more valuable gifts that the Resident's own sons, the lads from the Mission House, and a stray middy or two had offered me from time to time, only to meet with refusal. Luke was engaged to me — that made the difference. Nothing more.

So I put the jewels on, in their flashing beauty, green and blue above my dress of the changeable blue and green silk that I still loved as a foil to my copper hair; and I laced myself in, and powdered myself up, and made myself look as pretty as I knew how, for the night of a certain Residency ball. It was to be a great night of special festivity; for the war was over, and the soldiers were coming home.

Not the war that rises to your mind — no. It was another that came and passed, it may be, before you who read this were born. . . . It had seemed a great event to us, who lived in the far parts of the earth. We had read our newspapers with sharper hunger than usual, during those years of fighting away at the other side of the world. We had felt that mighty happenings were afoot. Some of our few white men had gone — a beach comber or so, gaining sudden glory and praise from a populace that had hitherto been coolly disapproving; a brace of Government officials; a planter, a store assistant — and one more, Harry England.

He had been the first to go, while others were debating, protesting, explaining, asking advice. England — so soon as the cables began to tell their story of a Britain too hard pressed — had, without discussion or remark, turned the head of his ship

from the port whither she was going, and sailed her straight down to Sydney. There he enlisted in an Australian Volunteer force, and laid up the *Queen of the Islands* against his return, or his death. Those who saw him leave the *Queen* saw also a strange sight. England, the hardest head and the boldest heart, so it was said, in the whole Pacific, walking down the gangway of the schooner with tears upon his face. There are some in the islands to-day who doubt if he, the lover of many women, loved ever one of them as he loved his white-winged *Queen*.

For three years, the Hawongas knew Harry England no more. Then the cables flashed the news of victory to Australia and New Zealand; and slowly, weeks after, steamers brought the news to Port Hervey. Now, but a few weeks later, those whom the war had spared were coming home. The two beach combers were dead. The Government officials had gone into another service. The planter had a lame foot and an injured eye. The storekeeper was suffering from after effects of enteric. Harry England was not dead; he had been wounded, but suffered no ill effects; he had not deserted the Pacific; and he was coming home. He had the D. S. O.— in a time when the D. S. O.'s were a distinction — for a feat of such daring valor that it would undoubtedly have gained the Victoria Cross, had it not been performed in open defiance to order. He was three years older, two and thirty now, and I, who had seen him but once or twice since the voyage from Hiliwa Dara, who had been but fourteen when he left, was seventeen now, and a woman.

And it was a dance night, and I was going, and he was to be there. . . . I suppose I have known thousands of tropic nights as lovely as that night must

have been, but I cannot recall one that does not, in recollection, pale before it. We walked to the dance, Lorraine and I, after the simple fashion of the islands. The moon was up, in a warm violet sky; the palm-tree crowns, black velvet underneath, bright silver above, stood moveless in a mighty sea of stars. All the giant leaves of the bananas were frosted with moon and dew. Some red hibiscus flowers, like immense carnations, had fallen in the pale dust of the roadway; the moon was so bright that we could see their vivid color. A long way off, across the harbor, peaks of the distant islands stood up; they were not shadowy, but clear, and of a wonderful fairy blue. I remember every moment of that walk. I remember how my small, high satin heels sank into the soft dust, and how the long strings of mammee-apple flowers, ivory colored in the moonlight, smelt very sweet and cold, and shook one's heart. . . . So many things, that night, shook my heart, that was already dancing and shaking under my sea-blue colored dress — the color that some one once had praised. . . . The coral reef, far out, kept up the nameless sound that island folk call singing, sighing, murmuring, yet that is none of the three; it seemed to call to me so that I could have gathered up my silks and thrown my little dancing shoes away, and run out, alone, through the moonlight into its tossing arms. And the reef, and the moon, and the mammee-apple flowers, all, in their calling, and their perfume, and their light, seemed to have something nameless — something that held my heart as if with hands — something that lived in long, dark, ruthless eyes. . . .

Lorraine walked silently beside me; she, too, felt the beauty of the night, perhaps even more than I did. She was like the night herself, all dark and

starry. Her dress was gauzy black, covered with silver sequins that flashed and scintillated with every movement; she had silver sequined slippers, and in her hair was a band of silver, set with one or two good diamonds. Lorraine dressed well always, in her own somber way; she had an independent fortune, the settlement of the marriage that was never made, given over to her by her dead lover's people. I knew her, now, to be thirty-five; it seemed to me an appalling age. She should, in my youthful opinion, have been wearing caps and cross-over shawls, and giving herself to good works . . . instead of which, she was walking by my side to the Residency dance, dressed for dancing, and looking absurdly young, and really handsome. . . . I could not but feel that it was rather indecent of Lorraine. However, I put up with it, silently, as one has to put up with so many foolish and mortifying freaks of the aged — at seventeen.

We had never much to say to each other when alone. I trod on in the silent dust silently, thinking of the steamer that lay down below us in the sheltered bay, and of the three soldiers who had come back in her from the war. The lights of the Residency burst upon us at a turn of the roadway; they were twice as many as usual — half the kerosene lamps in Port Hervey had evidently been borrowed by the Resident to make up this brave show. Dancing had not begun yet, but on the broad verandas where the dance was to take place, and where huge palm leaves, tied to the pillars, fluttered faintly in the breeze that swept the hill, complaining notes of violins being tuned sounded down to the road.

"Oh, they are beginning — they are beginning!" I cried. Heedless of chaperons I picked up my pre-

cious skirts, and, on the pointed toes of my sea-blue slippers, ran.

I reached the top of the hill not at all winded, for I was so slight, and as active as a squirrel. Mabelle, the Resident's daughter, met me on the steps. She was a pretty girl, and a special friend of mine.

"How do you like my red dress! Did you see the Queen? Oh, have you seen him?"

"Yes, very much. I saw her on the road; she's coming in a buggy; she's got her crown on, and the pet turtle with her. Who do you mean? Are the soldiers —"

"Yes, but I don't — I mean — oh, there's the Queen; I don't think dad will like her wearing her crown; it's rather cheek, isn't it, since we took over from the British?"

Mabelle, like all Residents' and Governors' daughters, was very keen on the subject of her father's prestige.

"She'll hear you," I warned, as Queen Lalua, six feet high, incredibly fat, dressed in a kind of nightdress of orange satin, carrying a small, impassive turtle under her arm, and wearing a silver-gilt crown with paste jewels, went up the steps.

"Do her good," said Mabelle severely. "When it was a Crown Colony of course the English let her do anything she liked, because they were so far away, and anyhow they always do — but now that New Zealand has been sitting on the place for nearly five years, these queens and people ought to know their —"

I put my fingers in my ears.

"If you're going to talk politics," I cried, "talk them alone; don't you want any partners?"

Mabelle pulled my fingers out.

"I haven't told you about him," she said, in a

half whisper. "He's a mysterious stranger; somebody brought him from the steamer, and oh, my dear, he is so handsome that —" She was hurrying with me to the dancing veranda. "He will have his card filled up," she panted, forgetting all about Lalua and her iniquities. "He dances divinely, I feel it in my bones." She pushed past a group of native princes and princesses, dressed in silk shirts and tunics, and in magnificent flowing nightdress robes of furniture velvet, trimmed with gold lace. "There," she said, laying one hand — she had pretty hands — on her fluttering heart. "There he is. They have just come; the steamer was late, and they came right up from her gangway. Captain England is with dad in his den. That's nobody — the storekeeper — there's the man I mean — he's just turning round — now look!"

I looked.

I saw a youth of twenty-one or two, wearing a dress suit of remarkably good cut — the only one on the veranda, save the Resident's. He was a dark-haired fellow, with an amazingly tanned face, in which were set two blue eyes like blue stones. He was slightly above middle height, and had a certain active and capable air about him, as if he were accustomed to use his muscles; I connected it, vaguely, with the deep tan of his face — and yet there was something about his cool, repressed look that rather suggested the student. . . . An odd combination — odd as the tan and the light, bright eyes; as the excellent dress suit ("it does show off a man with a real waist," whispered Mabelle) and the hands, which were well kept, but burned almost to blackness.

On the whole, the newcomer intrigued me somewhat, especially as I felt almost certain — though

not quite — that I had seen him somewhere before. I was just opening my lips to say so, when Mabelle, who had been staring with unconcealed delight, suddenly seized my arm.

" Oh, oh, look! " she whispered. And I saw that the dark-haired fellow with the strange blue eyes was walking right up to Lorraine, and holding out his hand.

" He knows her! " I exclaimed. I saw him speak to her, and then turn round to look about the veranda. Mabelle was standing right in front of me; and she was taller and broader than I, and I was half-veiled, besides, by a palm-screened pillar. I do not think I could have been visible to him. But, unlike Mabelle, I had no interest in knowing whether I was or not. Quite half my mind had been occupied, up to this, with another thought; and now, on a sudden, it overflowed, like a still, glassy dam that has been rising higher and higher, unseen, behind its embankment, and, all in a minute, rushes downward in a flood. . . .

The curtained doorway of the Resident's room (it had never been out of my mind, while we were talking) opened wide; the curtains shook and parted, and out came a tall, very tall figure in stained uniform of khaki. . . .

I felt something stop. I did not know whether it was the world, or just my heart — it might have been either, by the feeling. . . . I wonder how near we are to death, sometimes, in these moments that come and pass like the rush of a shooting star? Nearer than we think, it may be — does not Nature, the " wise nurse," make them swift, and very rare? . . .

The world — or was it my heart? — went on again. And I saw that the tall, tall figure in the

war-stained dress was coming towards me, and that its eyes were fixed on me. And they were long, dark, ruthless eyes, and above them rose the splendid brow, and beneath them showed the strong, ugly mouth, and the hard-set eyes, of Captain Harry England.

He was no beauty, in face — save for the forehead, that promised so much, that might have raised him so far. But in majesty of figure and bearing — I use the word "majesty" designedly; there is no other that fits — Harry England was king of any room he might enter, the whole world over.

Do you remember how some word, some sight, may have recalled to you things heard or seen in childhood, uncomprehended then, but now, in the flash of a new illumination, clear as the sun? That happened to me, when I saw Harry England enter the dancing room, and remembered, long ago, the drunken doctor talking to my father, away at Hiliwa Dara.

"Harry England — Harry the Fifth — direct line, but wrong side of the —" And my father's voice, stopping his speech. And the strange tales about Harry England that had been whispered, even in my guarded ear, by other girls at school — that he was "somebody if he chose to tell"; that the family he came from had a wonderful old house in Warwickshire, called "Faveroy," and had always been specially honored at Court. . . . That their name "meant something" and so did the name of the house. That Harry England had run away from home when a boy, because some other boy at school had said his family was descended from — oh, from a very wicked word! And he said he would go where there were no kings and queens, and make himself a king of another kind. . . .

These things came back; came back, also, the day when I had been at my history lesson with Lorraine, and had read of Harry the Fifth — Prince Hal — and how when he chose to hunt the deer he did not take his horse, but ran down the wild, swift things on foot, with only his own lords to help him drive the quarry —" which thing no other man in his kingdom might do." Came back, too, the remembrance of Harry England himself, as he ran, faster surely than ever man had run before, to save my father's life; of the tales that were told about his marvelous swiftness of foot. . . .

And as he crossed the room to me, I, meeting him for the first time since my childhood, looked on him no longer with a child's passionless eyes, but with the eyes of a woman. And with a woman's heart I knew him, however that old tale might run, as kingly; however the record of his days might run — dark though the tale might be — as my king.

So life is lived — in seconds; in minutes long as hours. The gray hours and years between them are not life.

Mabelle — incarnate prose, as always — broke in upon my moment of wonder.

" Look at this tall man! " she exclaimed, her fan up to shield her words. " He's coming here. I believe it's that terrible Captain England. I wonder he didn't get killed in the war by some of our own men; there are quite enough people who hate him, and who'd have been glad of the chance. Oh, talk to him, Dara; here's my beauty boy coming back, and if he doesn't ask me to dance I shall die! "

England, for a moment, had been delayed on his way; one or two men had deserted their partners to rush up to him and seize him by the hand . . . If

he was well hated among the islands — and it would be absurd to say he was not — he was also amazingly well loved by a certain faithful following. He got away from his admirers, I do not know how; I watched him making his way through the crowd that was momentarily growing thicker . . . almost as he was here . . .

"Your aquamarines look splendid," said a pleasant, strange voice behind me; and a strange hand — well-shaped, well-kept, but burned almost to blackness — was familiarly laid on my shoulder.

I turned round in a flame of anger. Somebody, I supposed, had been making too early acquaintance with the supper table . . . Such things were not unknown in the easy-going Love Island of Hawoga . . .

I confronted a face tanned seal-brown, blue eyes, a laughing, possessive expression. Assuredly, I thought, the key had been left out of the supper-room door.

"Please remove your hand," I said coldly (at seventeen, in the Hawongas, a pretty girl is not strange to this sort of thing). "You are making a —" And suddenly the words died away in my throat.

"Aren't *you* making a —" said the pleasant voice. "Do you mean to say you don't know me, Dara?"

I was dumb. I stared at him. And all the time, over my shoulder, I felt — without eyes I even saw — Harry England, coming closer — standing still.

Mabelle broke in again.

"I'm Miss Garstang," she said, with a nervous little giggle. "I'm your hostess, you know — won't you introduce yourself? You came with the

captain of the boat, didn't you? Can I find you a partner?"

She cast a languishing glance at him.

I knew what he was going to say — by some trick of thought reading — before he said it. Then it came.

"Why, I think this little lady knows me. I am Luke Ivory, and she is — to be — my wife. Remember me now, Dara?"

Lorraine had trained me well. "Never be shy," she used to say. "Never be taken aback. Never show feeling publicly. These are the tests of good breeding . . ."

I answered to the test. I don't know what I felt at the moment, it was one of those instants when temperature of feeling fuses thought — I can only recall the sensation of sudden deadness that came into my hands and my arms, up to the elbows, as the blood rushed back to my heart. My fingers seemed to be closed round my fan all stiff and cold, like dead fingers round a knot of funeral flowers, as I replied — quite, I think, in an ordinary voice:

"Certainly, Luke, I remember you now; please excuse me, but you have grown and changed so much. This is a great surprise. Mabelle, may I introduce Mr. Ivory to you?"

Maybelle, fingering her program, became instantly intent on securing the coveted dance; but she had self-possession enough left to tread on my foot secretly, and to whisper close to my ear, "Oh, you lucky little devil, you sly little devil!" while she was scribbling "Ivory" on her card.

The dance just starting was the one that she marked. Luke, after writing "Miss Garstang" neatly opposite "Number one," turned to me and, smiling, took my card from my hand.

By this time my usual following of lads had collected from all corners of the veranda, and were calling out gay requests for a waltz — a two-step — anything I had left. Luke, smiling still, held my card steadily across his palm while he wrote his name on it — once. Beginning at the second dance the name stretched down the card to the last dance after supper.

He gave me back my card, burst one arm round Mabelle's most willing waist, and swung out on to the floor.

The boys, seeing my card, voiced their remonstrances.

"Oh, oh, Miss Hamilton!" "Oh, Miss Dara! that's piracy; are you going to let him have the lot?" "Don't be put upon; cut half a dozen for us!" They clattered and hustled like a flock of fowls at feeding time.

A little way off, Harry England looked at me with his strange, dark, silent eyes and, without a word, passed down the room, and away.

CHAPTER VIII

I DANCED that dance — it was a waltz; people waltzed a great deal in that year. I danced it every bar, I reversed as my partner — a feathery-mustached youth, whom I had selected at random — liked to do; I laughed and talked. I saw the people as we swung and glided past them; a few chaperons (not many — most of the girls had come in parties); a few non-dancing men, white-clad; the plain young woman from the Mission, who never got a dance, and never gave up hoping; the grave, stately figures of the Hawongan chiefs and chieftainesses, once rulers of the archipelago, with power of life and death in their brown hands, now mere ciphers in the sum of island politics, mere statues of their own past greatness. I saw all these things; they did not seem to me to be real. My partner was a squeaking ghost that scuttered in space. I was a mist, a handful of foam — nothing living and substantial. There was music, I suppose, or we could not have danced, but I cannot remember having heard a note of it. I did not seem to be living through that dance; it was as if I had slipped into a crevice between minute and minute, and, removed from the onward rush of time, waited . . .

The dance came to an end. The youth with the feathery mustache let his arm slip down from my waist, and halted in an opening among the veranda pillars.

"Let's have the next," he pleaded, fanning me

furiously. "What does that fellow from the steamer mean by stealing your whole program?" (For Luke's announcement, heard by Mabelle, myself, and — I knew — one other, had not caught the general ear.) "Can't you — Dash him, here he is again! Are you really going to —"

His remonstrances faded away on my ear as the noise of a city dies away when the steamer finds her speed and glides to sea. Luke had my arm, and was leading me down the steps. Luke drew me away from the glitter, the laughing and talking and violin tuning, the moving crowds, and the still, looking-on crowds of the dance. Luke found a seat, white in the moonlight, fronted by the silver-spangled sea and the hills of the outer islands, far and fairy-blue. He swept his hand along it, found it damp with night dew, and pulled off his long-tailed coat to cushion the bench for me.

"Now, Dara," he said, sitting down beside me, and looking — I could not but allow — amazingly handsome in his shirt sleeves, a costume that above all others suits the well-made man, "you and I are going to have a talk."

I pulled myself together. This matter was real; it would have to be faced. Above all things, the tone in Luke's voice would have to be faced. He spoke as if I were his undisputed property . . . "The masculine creditor" was a phrase that had never fallen on my ears, but I think its spirit was in my mind just then.

"How on earth —" I began; but he took up the conversation.

"I hadn't a chance to tell you. I heard the manager at Hiliwa Dara had been playing up, and there was just time to catch the steamer and go and see to things myself. It's nothing serious, but he

may have to be sacked . . . But what I really wanted to say, Dara, is that I've only an hour or two to talk to you, so you simply must cut everything else. There's a launch going out at high tide — two o'clock this morning — and she's arranged to go a few miles out of her way to drop me at the island; she'll take about three days, but it's better than staying on the chance of anything else, with that manager. But don't let's talk about him; I say, do you know what a stunning little girl you've turned out?"

"Yes," I answered calmly. "There have been a few people here who told me."

"There would be," said Luke proudly. "Your photos don't give one an idea. By the way, I must apologize for not having had mine taken lately, but I do hate being photo'd so. Lorraine says you're a top-notcher in the school. She was awfully pleased to see me. She says I've — says I'm — well, she was awfully nice, and she told me she'd have thought I was twenty-four or five. Of course, I'm getting near twenty."

"Yes," I said again.

There seemed to be something the matter with my throat. I had to swallow before I could speak. Luke went on, his face turned towards me, his arm along the back of the seat behind my shoulders, his eyes running over me with a kind of surprised delight:

"Of course, I'm cutting something off my year at the School of Mines — half of it, anyhow — for this trip, but as things are I can afford it; I've been getting on pretty well, and I felt, apart from the plantation business, that I was just about bound to see you again . . . Those old people — those old people! Oh, they were wiser than we knew,

Dara. You don't know what that tie has been to me these last years. You can't know what it's meant —" He stopped for a moment, and then went on:

"They said, you know — they said, you know —" He stopped again; it seemed difficult to say. I sat as if frozen; I could not think; I watched the lace rising and falling on the breast of my sea-blue gown; it seemed to beat like a living heart.

"They said that when I was twenty-one and you were eighteen, don't you remember?"

I could not speak.

"Answer, answer!" he said. "Don't you remember?"

"Yes," I found strength to say. How the reef, far out in the moonlight, was calling — calling! The call of the sea! The call of the wild sea life, and of the wild souls who lived it! . . .

"That will be — next year," said Luke. "Perhaps sooner. You know I'm nearer twenty-one than you are to eighteen — by two months. And I shall be twenty-one in two and a half months from now. Suppose we say November? I could get Dinah to come over as soon as I've settled things up with that manager chap, and she could tidy the place up for us, and there we should be, settled down as snug as two birds in a nest, long before Christmas time. How does that strike you, girlie?"

He was so bright, so boyish and, withal, so manly in his manner and his speech that I found myself unable to say what I had wanted — what I had fully meant to say, when we came out together from the dancing veranda. I was not even sure what it was that I had meant to say. Wherein was anything altered since I had run up the Residency avenue ahead of Lorraine, through the moonlit dust,

eager only for the dance and its never-failing triumphs? I had known then that I was engaged — engaged with unusual solemnity — to Luke Ivory, the lad with whom I had played long ago on the plantation. What had happened to alter things since then? I had seen Harry England for a moment; I had not spoken to him; probably he would not care to speak to me, or to have anything to do with me, now that he knew . . .

Of that moment when the rose of life had opened before me, and I had, all in an instant, known things unspeakable, I was now ashamed. How could I, so strictly brought up, have permitted myself to feel so for a man who was nothing, who never by any possibility could be anything, to me? A man, above all, who assuredly had no interest in me. Whereas this Luke at my side had stripped the coat from his shoulders to make a seat for me; was almost trembling with wonder and delight over the change in me from little girl to fair, desired woman; asked nothing better than to give up his life to caring for and living for me . . . And besides, I was vowed to him by the strongest of all possible vows. That play of my father's and old Ivory's, though every one had assured me (without knowing of whom or what they spoke) that it was no marriage, still was a solemn, a binding tie. I regarded it as such, of course.

I should have been exceedingly glad to see Luke and, of course, I was. I was also, of course, extremely interested in discussing our future arrangements. So I told myself, severely. I sat up a little straighter on the bench, shook out my dress with a hand that glittered with Luke's jewels, and deliberately assumed my share in the talk.

"It seems a very good plan," I said. "That

would mean about three months from now, wouldn't it? I should want quite that time to get my things, you know."

"Oh, get your things, as many as you like, and don't spare them," said Luke. "I tell you what, Dara, that island is going to be more of a bonanza than ever you and I had any idea. Did you never wonder why I went to the School of Mines?"

"Why, no, not exactly. I thought your guardian —"

"Don't worry about my guardian. I'm Australian enough to be able to guard myself, this good while, though I daresay I'd still be sucking toffee and writing impositions at school if I were an Englishman. I chose to go to the School of Mines just as I chose to do the agricultural course, and the forestry — that's what's made me such a color, but I like it, it seems like the color a man ought to be, you know; I hate pinky fellows. Well, I know a bit about forestry now, and enough about tropical agriculture to see that my manager ought to be boiled in oil, and then drowned — and as to the mines business — But I'll keep that for a titbit. Thing is, Dara, you can splosh all you like about buying pretty-pretties; order them by cable from Sydney — the boat can send it when they touch at the next group. Make yourself look as nice as you like, and don't mind the cost."

He talked on and on. Luke had not been a chattering sort of boy in the old days, and I did not think he was — usually — much of a talker in all probability now, but the circumstances were not usual. There were but a few hours before the boat went out again; and he had the accumulated news, feelings, hopes of more than five years to let out.

I sat beside him on the moon-white bench, silent, listening to him. He had much to tell me about myself, once the flood of natural young, egotistical talk had had full run. I was to take great care of my health, and not to get chills, and not to get fever, and not to stay out too long in the sun, or go swimming without a bathing hat —

And here he broke off to tell me, with sparkling eyes, about the swimming races he had won, and the long and high jump medals that he held.

" Not the same year, of course," he said wisely. " Swimming doesn't want that kind of muscle — you get ' bound ' . . . Dara, you can't think how — how drunk one gets on that sort of glory. It's maddening. It has spoiled lots of good men — to be a smart athlete. I swore it shouldn't spoil me; I'd seen a few go that way. So I gave it up, and went out of training, but it was hard. I always keep fit, of course; but that's not the same. Only, you know, I've an idea — do I bore you, spilling out all my ideas like this? No? Well, then, I'll go on — I've an idea that a man who keeps up first-class athletics, things that need perfect training, after his earlier days, is bound to grow into either a fool or a brute — more likely a brute . . . But that can't really interest you, you dear little polite thing."

Could it not? Did I not know of one man who had kept up his wonderful strength of body; who worshiped it and lived for it? Was he, the descendant of the king who hunted the red deer on his own swift feet — which thing no other man in all his realms might compass — was he a brute, or a fool?

" He is neither," was my silent verdict. " Luke

does not know everything. After all, he is very, very young." And I felt superior, patronizing. At seventeen I knew I was far older than he.

"Well," said Luke, switching off again. "I've got those medals, and I shall have them made into the prettiest kind of a belt clasp for you that Sydney can manage — but there'll never be any more. I have planned out all our life, Dara. It looks a long, long road, and a sunny one, with pleasant things all the way. They say no one is happy. Well, I think you and I are going to break that record; aren't we, girlie?"

Almost shyly he let that wandering arm on the back of the seat drop lower, round my shoulders and, turning my unresisting face to his, kissed me once — twice. I kissed him back; I thought it was polite that I should do so. Luke set his hands on my shoulders and looked at me long and steadily, in the brilliant moonlight.

"You are not much changed, after all, Dara," he said. There was something strange in his tone; the fire and sparkle, the eager talkativeness of a few minutes past seemed to have suddenly died away. "Are you sure — are you quite sure — that you wish — that I am not hurrying you in settling all this? You haven't been saying very much."

Suddenly I felt afraid, as one does feel afraid of those whose nearness to one either in blood or in long associations gives them the fearful power of reading one's soul. I did not want mine to be read — I did not know why . . .

"Oh!" I cried, bursting into sudden talk, "you didn't give me a chance, you had so much to say, but, of course, I agree with everything; I shall send to Sydney for my things — David Farmer's is the place, isn't it? — and I'll remember everything you

told me about being careful and all that. I was awfully interested in the things you've been telling me. And about the medals. And how you got so famed — and the School of Mines. Of course I am interested — and delighted. How could you think —"

"All right, I didn't think," said Luke consolingly. The shade of disappointment cleared away from his face. I, whom many lad lovers in this Love Island had made wise beyond my years, could guess what was in his mind. "He is thinking," I said to myself, "that I am nothing but a child still; now that's absurd . . ." But I said no more . . . Do you remember the time when you feared to open your lips lest some wild animal of a secret that you were keeping caged should glimpse the light and suddenly bolt for freedom? . . .

Away on the dancing veranda the violins began again, with the firm notes of the piano marching steadily beneath. I leant out and listened. The music trembled, lifted, and swept, with a swing that seemed to reach from stars to earth, into the one great waltz of the world.

"Blue Danube! Blue Danube!" I cried, jumping to my feet. "Let's not miss this. I can't sit out Blue Danube. How are you on waltzing?"

"All right," answered Luke, putting on his coat. "I shouldn't like to miss the old Danube myself. Come along." He took me by the hand and, laughing, we ran together, as we had been used to run long ago down the sands of Hiliwa Dara into the tossing sea. The great verandas of the Residency were trembling from end to end with the sway of a hundred dancers; the chaperons, alone, and the impassive native kings and queens kept their places by the walls. . . . Not even all of

would have predicted it years ago, maybe, with a cynical laugh. One who knew the hidden tragedy that underlies women's lives would have seen it, with a throb of sadness. I, to whom all life beyond five and twenty was a sort of unimportant postscript, who " could not away with " the silliness of these elder folk, was simply irritated and annoyed. My scheme of existence had no place for a rejuvenated Lorraine. Besides, it was absurd!

I watched her, looking young and beautiful, dancing with fire, attracting the attention of half the room, though all were busy enjoying the waltz themselves. I shook my head impatiently, held out my right hand to Luke, and swung into the dance. One must really try and forget such nonsense! . . .

What the real cause of that change had been — what decree of Fate had gone forth in the hour that elapsed between the beginning of the dance and the playing of " Blue Danube "— I knew or guessed no more than I guessed of the Great War that lay so many years ahead, nor of the ships that then should fly through blue air instead of blue water. Nevertheless the powers of chance had been playing at dice for me within that hour, and the die that had made the deciding throw was marked " Lorraine."

We finished the dance; the famous waltz throbbed to its very end. We drew back against the veranda rails, Luke fanning me vigorously. The fan he held was one of his gifts, like my necklace, my bracelet, earrings and ring; my gloves, my beautiful lace handkerchief. I had never been allowed to accept gifts from any other man; indeed, I never had wished to accept any gifts that had been offered to me save these of Luke's . . .

While he waved the carved sandalwood fan back and forward in front of me, scenting the air with

its delicate fresh perfume, I found myself thinking and wondering . . . If Harry England were in love, really in love with any girl, what would he give her? Somehow I felt it would not be fans and rings and handkerchiefs. I wondered what it would be.

"Want to dance the next?" broke in Luke. "We got on bonzer, didn't we?"

I didn't want to dance the next; I wanted to snatch a moment to look about me — to see — to think — but I did not care to say so. The ancient guile of my sex came to the rescue.

"Lorraine is looking at you," I said. She was; she had fixed those emerald eyes of hers on him from across the veranda; unmistakably she wished to speak to him again. "Don't you think," I said, "that you might give her a dance? She seems keen on it to-night."

"I should like to, if you don't mind," he answered promptly. "She's a cracker at dancing. I don't say you are not first class yourself, but, of course, she's had much longer to learn than you."

"I should think so," I laughed in reply; Lorraine's superior age seemed to me, naturally, the best of jokes . . .

"Keep the next but one for me," said Luke, walking off.

Mabelle's red head came round the corner of a pillar.

"Are you going to keep him all the night to yourself, you sly thing?" she breathed. "Can't you cut a dance or two, and let one have a chance? He dances like an angel; I was sure he would — and you've got him safe, you needn't mind me. Can't I introduce any one to you? I'm your hostess, you know, I ought to —"

"Introduce Captain England, if you like," I said, swaying my fan back and forwards to hide the trembling of my hands. I was in agony lest some one should claim me first . . .

But Mabelle was anxious on her own account to see me ably partnered. She had found Harry England somewhere outside the veranda before ten bars of "Les Amoureuses" were past. She brought him up and presented him formally. Luke and Lorraine by now were waltzing together. She did not look into his eyes and languish as she had done in England's arms; I could only see, as she passed, her white, black-lashed lids; her lips were a little parted, her hand rested lightly — very lightly — on Luke's arm. I wondered what she was thinking of. As to Luke, his face expressed very clearly the pleasure of dancing with an excellent partner. He was talking, but I could not hear what he said.

Mabelle bustled off. Harry England, without a word — not even the conventional "May I have the pleasure?"— took my hand and my waist and swept me out on the veranda. And I knew in an instant that I had never danced in my life before.

He danced without speaking; he did not look at me. He seemed to make no effort whatever, yet I flew in his touch like a leaf blown by the wind. I could not feel the floor; my feet seemed to glide upon waves of pure music. And the music was Harry England; and all the time, though he never opened his lips, it was speaking for him; telling me things wonderful, not to be believed . . .

This was what it meant to dance, I kept thinking. This was what waltzes were written for. How was it I had never known?

. . . Something broke, and came crashing down

to ruin. It was only the end of the dance, but for a moment I felt as one feels who has slipped from a height. Then I knew that I was standing at the side of the veranda and that Harry England — still without a word — had bowed to me and left me. I did not need to be told why he had not spoken. Through all the wonder of the dance, through all the unbelievable, beautiful things that the music was saying to me, I had felt beneath the scorching breath of an unseen lava flow the current of England's anger. The anger was not for me; at least for me only in part; but its very presence burned. And the fire that had lit it was — I knew — Luke Ivory's speech.

What then? One does not live in a Love Island without becoming wise, too wise, about love. Trouble, then. Danger, then. If Luke was a boy almost he had a will of cast steel. If England had no right to be angered about anything that concerned me he was not one to trouble over rights or wrongs.

"It isn't my fault?" I thought to myself. "What am I to do?"

"Put in your hairpins; you look half wild," said Lorraine's cool voice, as if in answer. She was sitting beside me; England — of course — had steered me to my chaperon before leaving me, but I had not noticed it till then.

"Bend down," said Lorraine, "I'll do it." She settled my hair with deft fingers. "Why did you dance with England?" she whispered almost in my ear.

"Did you not want me to?" I asked, puzzled and confused. Had Lorraine taken a fancy — but, no, that was too absurd! I could not construe the look she gave me.

"Why did you?" she said again, with burning eyes.

It seemed as if she had not heard me. There was surely something mad about Lorraine that night. She looked at me as if she loved and hated me, all in the same instant; she almost caressed my hair, and then pushed me away from her.

"Go and dance," she said. "Go and dance with him. He is coming for you."

"Why, he is going down the steps," I said; and, indeed, I had just caught sight of England's tall figure passing out into the moonlight.

Lorraine gave a low, breathless laugh and twisted me round by one arm. Luke Ivory was standing beside me, program in hand.

"I'll throw this away," he said. "We shan't want it again."

"Oh, no, you won't want it again," said Lorraine, with another of those curious laughs. Luke gave me his arm.

"We'll have another stroll," he said, leading me down the steps. "How astonishingly well Lorraine is looking. She is really a beauty, isn't she?"

"I suppose she was when she was young," I answered lightly. What had Lorraine to do with us?

Luke made no reply to this. He waited till we were out of earshot of the veranda, and then began, as we walked slowly in the moonlight down the tinkling coral pathway:

"Dara, I've a favor to ask you. I might make it a right, but I won't."

"Well?" I answered him listlessly, turning round and round the old turquoise ring — it was on my little finger now, being far too small for the

third, which besides was occupied with Luke's half hoop of diamond-pointed aquamarines.

"I want to ask you not to dance with that man again."

"What man?"

"That's foolish. Of course you know whom I mean. Captain England."

"Lorraine —"

"I know she did. But Lorraine's much older than you, and anyhow I think she might have been better employed. Thing is, England's not fit for you to dance with."

"What do you know against him?"

"Nothing but what you know yourself. You can't have lived here all these years —"

"He's been away at the war."

"Are you defending him?" asked Luke, with a tone in his voice that reminded me more than a little of old Ivory.

At this my temper — always quick, like that of most red-haired people — sprang into flame.

"Why should I not defend him?" I asked, dropping Luke's arm and turning face to face with him. We eyed each other like two fencers about to give battle.

"Because," said Luke, beginning to breathe hard, "he's the worst man in the islands, and you should not even know enough about him to discuss him, if I could help it."

"I don't see that you can," was my reply. As he grew hot I seemed to grow cold.

"Can't I? Can't I? I think a man has a right to —"

"Hush!" I broke in, with a warning push on his arm. "Somebody's coming." The gravel had tinkled again in the shadow of a big mango tree.

Luke looked round, saw something that I did not, and deliberately, in a clear voice, went on:

"A man has a right to protect — his wife."

The step came nearer. A man moved out of the shadow of the mango tree into the vivid moonlight . . . Yes, I had known it was England.

If Luke, I thought, chose to discuss intimate matters in the presence of other people, I was not going to balk him.

"I didn't know you had one," was my reply.

England came nearer, walking slowly; he had a small cigar in his hand, and was cutting off the tip. He stopped when he reached us, and nodded to Luke. I was sure he must have heard every word, but from his manner no one would have guessed it.

"You are the little boy I took away from Hiliwa Dara six years ago," he remarked. "You've grown quite a lot. Are you still at school?" He nipped the end off his cigar and struck a match.

"School of Mines," said Luke.

Every word of England's had been an insult, but Luke spoke with perfect self-possession and courtesy. I felt that I ought to have admired him for it.

"Oh!" observed England, putting a match to his cigar. "Do you mind, Dara?" he asked me, holding it to his lips.

He had put a match to something more than his cigar, as I saw by the sudden light in Luke's eyes when my name was spoken. But still my old comrade kept hold of himself.

"Mrs. Ivory!" he replied evenly, "does not mind smoking in the open air, I think."

"Where is she?" asked England, with an air of surprise. He looked up and down the pathway. "I don't see any one about but Dara and you."

"Dara," said Luke, and now there was a tone in

his voice that told of rising tides —" Dara is my wife."

Harry England under the light of the high, full moon looked from one to the other of us. His face was inexpressive.

" What is the joke? " he asked. And he put the small cigar back into his mouth and began to draw at it. " Can you smoke? " he asked incidentally, holding out his case to Luke. The verb was another insult. I began to understand why so many men, in so many islands, hated this Harry England.

Luke took no notice of the question or of the offered case.

" There is no joke," he said. " Dara and I were married at Hiliwa Dara Plantation six years ago."

" Oh! " I screamed, " and you promised on the Bible not to tell."

" You'll remember," said Luke, " that I made an exception."

" It was nonsense," I said, breathing quickly, my hands clenched tightly over my fan — Luke's fan. " I know it was. I've asked."

" And you promised on the Bible, without any exceptions, not to tell," observed Luke.

" I didn't — I —"

" I thought you said you did. But this is rather public."

" It needn't be," remarked England. He began to stroll away.

" Just wait a minute," said Luke, with a certain dangerous coolness in his voice. " Dara and I can talk presently. You and I are going to talk now. That is — Dara, I'll take you back to Lorraine for the present, and I hope you won't mind if I cut one or two of your dances."

I had been a greater fool by far than Nature had

made me had I not understood what was in the wind. But I consented to return. My secret plan was to detain Luke at all hazards once we were in the dancing veranda again. I pretended not to understand; I laughed and talked as we returned to the house. What a night it was! The shadows under the mango domes were pools of ink, the coral path a strip of dazzling silver. Across the sea of moonlight once or twice flying foxes sped, black, silent, big as dogs. . . .

Deceive, if you can, a great criminal lawyer; a priest skilled in the care and cure of souls; a friend who has been your companion during years of maturity. But never hope to deceive the man or woman whose childish life has been knit with yours.

Luke knew exactly what I was doing; what I meant to do. We had but reached the foot of the veranda steps when he loosed my arm, bowed as politely as if he had met me for the first time that night, ran up another flight of steps, and disappeared among the dancers. I followed as quickly as I could. He was not to be seen. Certainly, whatever his intentions were, he had not gone straight back to the place where he had left England.

"He will go some roundabout way," I thought, my heart beating wildly. "I must find out." But I knew that there was no time — or almost none — for finding. Before I could track out Luke, danger would have passed into disaster. And I could not think — I could not decide what to do.

"Lorraine!" was the only thought that came to me. Lorraine never lost her head; she always knew what was to be done . . .

But Lorraine was dancing. In her new beauty, with that unfamiliar, novel charm circling her like a halo, she was gliding down the veranda in long

curves and sweeps like a skater, a khaki-clad arm about her waist. She seemed entirely absorbed in the dance. How was I to attract her attention?

"Oh, my God!" I said to myself; "they'll kill each other!" I hid behind a palm; if I were seen partnerless half a dozen of my usual following would be on the alert at once . . . Lorraine swept by again. I looked out through the leaves. Her glance passed over me; I was sure she had not seen me. "What am I to do?" I thought piteously. "What am I to do?"

The band blared on; cornet, piano, first and second violin. "White Heather" it was now. Somebody began to sing the words, and the whole veranda took them up and swept dancing on to the tune of:

> "Speed, bonny boat, like a bird on the wing,
> 'Onward,' the sailors cry;
> . . . 'Carry the lad that's born to be King, . . .
> Over the sea to Skye.'"

I almost burst out crying. What were the "lad born to be King" and that other lad whose ring I wore doing now, outside there in the peaceful moonlight?

But I had, as usual, misjudged Lorraine. She had seen my face; she had read disaster in it and, with that swift mind of hers, guessed and decided in an instant. She took another turn or so along the veranda, and then disengaged herself from her partner.

"So sorry," I heard her saying, "but that naughty little niece of mine — she has disappeared, and I must look after her. It's a dreadful thing to be a chaperon, isn't it? No, no, I won't trouble you — certainly not. I'll just run out and see where

she has got off to, and with whom. These girls, these little girls!" She slipped away from the young soldier — I think he hardly knew how — and passing by my hiding place motioned with one hand to the low veranda railing. I understood her, and was over in an instant, unobserved. The house, like many island homes, was set on piles seven feet high. Lorraine stepped underneath into the dense shadow. Above our heads the feet of the dancers slipped and slid, with a sound like a field of wind-blown corn; the flooring trembled; "White Heather" pealed from piano and violin —

. . . "Carry the lad that's born to be King . . ."

"Have they quarreled?" demanded my aunt instantly. Her sequins and diamonds glistened in the dusk; her face was a pale blur above her shadowy dress.

"Yes — what am I to do? They're going to fight. Oh, Lorraine, I'm sure they're fighting now; what shall I —"

"He will be killed if they do," said Lorraine, and even in the dusk among the piles I thought I saw her face turn paler. She swept her dress about her. "Take me to where you left them — instantly," she said.

"He won't be killed!" I told her tremblingly, as I led the way to the coral pathway and the mango trees. "He is so much older and —"

"You little fool!" said Lorraine bitingly. "You don't deserve —" She broke off short. "Run," she said. "They are all going in to supper now; no one will see."

The waltz had ended; there was a great shuffling of feet. I ran. She followed me, light as a deer.

In the darkness of the mango avenue I thought I heard other steps, but I did not pause to look behind. Fear had seized me by the heart; for the first time I seemed to understand what these male passions meant unleashed; what horror they might work.

We came out into the moonlight; and there, ten paces from us, were Luke and Harry England. For a moment I felt relieved; they seemed to be simply talking . . .

Lorraine checked me. We crept nearer. They did not notice us.

". . . believe it or not, it's true," Luke was saying. I could see his face, though I could not see the other. He looked a noble youth; a true and honorable man. Young as he was, his hands were strong enough to carry the burden of a loved woman's life.

England said something, I do not know what. The low bass purr of his voice carried less certainly than Luke's clearer tone.

" If you've any decent feeling you will let her alone," spoke Luke again. " I want your word on that before I sail to-night."

A brief, scornful question fell from England's lips.

" The right of her husband," was Luke's answer.

England's reply this time I heard in part, but it was couched in words that I did not understand. And Luke, without an instant's hesitation, struck him on the mouth. And as I saw his lithe young body swing out in a line with his arm I screamed.

It was that, I think, that saved his life. More men than one among the islands had been sent to their long sleep beneath the palms by one of England's terrible counters. But why should I not

say it? — Harry England loved me in his own wild way; and the sound of my voice crying out delayed his hand for the fraction of a second that was necessary to save it from yet another stain. In that brief moment Lorraine, with a wildcat spring, had flung herself between the pair. Either of the men could have snapped her white, slim arm like a flower stalk; but she held them as securely as if she had been a giantess.

"Have either of you thought," she panted, "what a scandal you are making? Do you know Hawonga? Not one of the three of you will have a rag of character left to-morrow. I suppose you men can do without it, but what about my niece?"

The two had fallen apart. There was blood on England's mouth; he did not wipe it, but let it fall in a trickling stream over his khaki coat. On his hard, teak-like face, now fully visible under the moon, there was not a sign of expression. Even those dark, ordinarily ruthless-looking eyes were empty as bits of glass. I do not know why, but it frightened me. He seemed like something not quite human.

Luke looked frankly furious, now that his guard of self-command was fairly beaten down. I never saw him handsomer; he was to my excited fancy of the moment like a young St. George conquering the dragon.

"Oh, anybody ought to love you!" I thought in my own mind. But at the face of the dragon I did not dare, after the first glance, to look at all. I did not dare to think about it.

"If you suppose it's going to stop there —" said Luke, breathing hard.

"I don't," said Harry England. His voice seemed to have gone down a note or two deeper

since I last heard it; it made one think of the sound of distant but advancing thunder.

Into the momentary silence that fell — all three of us standing still, and looking at one another — came a curious, hissing sound. I thought it was a snake at first, and started back. Then, being island bred, I recognized it for the noise that is sometimes made by the turtle when excited or alarmed, and immediately I knew whose were the feet that, almost soundless, had followed us down the mango avenue.

Lorraine knew, too. Without turning round she said to me, "The Queen."

I fancy Queen Lalua had been in hiding — despite her age and fatness, she possessed the native talent for concealing herself like an animal in almost any cover. But she came forward with perfect dignity, carrying her turtle (the insignia of royalty in the Hawonga Islands) under one arm, and trailing her orange satin robes on the gravel as she walked. Behind her, like a shadow, silent and unobtrusive, crept the half-caste maid of honor, Maiera.

"What is dis?" said Lalua, speaking in good English, and with the air of majesty that not even two depositions had removed from her — any more than they had removed her influence and authority in the islands. "England, why you fighting wit' dis young Ariki?" (chief).

"I am not fighting," was England's reply. "Not yet."

"He has blooded your mout'."
"That will be paid for."
"Paid for how, England?"

Fifteen years ago, when Harry England had been eighteen — almost the age of Luke — and Lalua had been nine and twenty, beautiful and a queen

indeed, people had told tales of them in the islands. They always tell tales. Those may or may not have been true. Lalua in these latter days said that she loved " England " like a son. And I think she did. It is certain that she had more influence over him than had any one in the Hawongas. He answered her now, though probably he would have answered no one else who had so questioned him.

" The same way Williams paid, and Nukagiva Jack."

" As soon as you like, and as much as you like," interrupted Luke. " You needn't think you are the only man in the Pacific."

" You shall not fight him, if you have any of the sense at all," said Lalua. " You no want to die so young, you with the pretty girl to love."

" Excuse me, madam," was Luke's polite reply. " This is my affair."

" And mine, Queen," said Harry England. " Ivory and I will settle later." He had not changed an iota of that curious calm. Luke was still flushed and vivid-eyed.

" Youth," I heard Lorraine say to herself, scarce above her breath. " Oh, God, youth! " It seemed to me exceedingly funny that she should say that — funny, yet exasperating . . .

Nobody asked what had happened to Williams and Nukagiva Jack. Lalua and Maiera evidently knew, and the rest of us had no difficulty in guessing. But I could not believe England meant — *that* — to Luke Ivory. I thought they might fight, and that some one — perhaps both — would be hurt. No more.

Lalua — the Queen — wherever and however she had gained her knowledge, knew better.

"He will kill him wid his hand," she stated to Lorraine, quite coolly.

"If he does," said Lorraine, her rapier spirit suddenly flashing from its sheath, "he shall die himself."

Oh, the wisdom, the shrewdness in the look that Lalua cast her! Lalua, who had ruled a group of islands for thirty years; Lalua, whose power not even the British Empire had availed to dethrone!

"Some one say a t'ing and not mean it, many time," said the Queen, in an absent, singsong tone. "Dat one not you."

Maiera, the maid of honor, silent, beautiful, watched without a word.

The Queen fixed England with her glance.

"You shall not fight wit' him," she pronounced. He returned her look with one in which there was a certain questioning. He seemed to see behind her words. But the feeling of thunder in the air — of male, cruel passions let loose — still remained. I wondered if Lorraine felt it as I did.

"I beg your pardon, madam, but he certainly will," put in Luke. "He wants a lesson."

"Maybe, but you not to give it," answered Lalua. She took one step to England, and whispered briefly in his ear. I saw the sinister stillness of his face break up. His eye flashed dark lightning; he laughed. But he looked at no one. I felt him, if I may put it so, not looking.

"I shan't interfere with you, Ivory," he stated.

At this Luke's politeness, his consideration for the presence of ladies, failed him — I cannot blame him much; England's tone would have vexed a saint. Luke flew at him on the spot. But Lalua the Queen,

wise in the ways of this tempestuous Love Island, had expected as much, and was on the watch. She, in her turn, simply fell with the whole weight of her six feet and sixteen stone on Luke, and whelmed him in satin-smothered flesh.

"Go, you England!" she ordered. And England, laughing a little, went away.

With Lalua the Queen enveloping him from the rear, and Maiera the beautiful maid of honor not at all unwilling, hanging round his neck in front, Luke had to give in. Lalua was the first to relax her hold. Maiera, for some reason or no reason, chose to hold on until the last sound of Harry England's footsteps had died away; until I began to feel a little amazed, and (illogically) a little jealous, and until Lorraine flashed a contemptuous look at her that said "Native" as plain as speech. Then she released him and dramatically, with a jeweled, creamy finger, pointed downwards to the harbor.

"Look!" she said. "That's the launch. Listen!"

A thin, complaining wail came up to the coral terrace.

"Lord!" said Luke, "I shall just have time to catch her. Lorraine, a word with you." He drew aside from Lalua and her maid of honor. "You needn't go, Dara; I had just as soon you heard me. Lorraine, I have got to sail in that boat, but I would rather risk anything than go if you weren't here. I trust you. Don't let that — that —"

"I know the word you mean," she said calmly. "I thought it was very decent of you not to use it. Most men would have — to one of the Englands of Faveroy."

"Don't let — him," went on Luke, "get her

talked about. He will if he can. She's too young to understand him. I — I trust — Good-by, Lorraine, good-by. There's no one like you." He wrung her hand till I think her rings must have cut into the flesh (why does a man never remember one's rings?), kissed me, suddenly and strongly, and with a nod to Lalua, whom he had not yet forgiven, went down the walk.

Lalua watched him away.

"He will see England, perhaps," she announced, apparently to no one. "No matter, England will not fight him. Never will he."

"Queen, you are wonderful," said Lorraine, fixing Lalua with her deep green eyes. For once, I think, she felt she had met her superior. The heart of Queen Lalua was a well too deep for her plummet.

"Yes," said Lalua the Queen, "I am." She seemed like some old Assyrian statue, with her crown and her loose, short, curling hair, and her massive draperies, as she stood looking down over the harbor and the sleeping town.

It was two o'clock; all lights were out in Port Rodney; all sounds hushed in the flowery, dusty streets that lay so small and clear beneath the moon.

"Dis is a night," said the Queen, "on what t'ings may happen, as you say." She used an expressive native translation. "Dat means," she said, "dat the god which make trouble, he walk about to-night. I think enough t'ing have happen. Very good you shall, we shall all go home to de beds."

And we went. And, expecting to lie awake till dawn, I, who was broken almost to pieces by the falling of event after event in the few brief hours

of that evening, fell dead asleep, and slept till the sun was high.

Lorraine in the morning told me that Luke had sailed.

"He will be back by the steamer in three weeks' time," she said.

CHAPTER IX

IT was the siesta, or, as they call it in the islands, the lie-down hour.

From one to three, over most of the island world, is the loneliest time of day. There is no "hush of morning." As soon as the sun is up, often before, wood is being chopped, fires lit, buckets are rattling beneath iron tanks, china tinkling on tables. Boots sound on the carpetless long floors of the verandas. Horses, tied to gates, paw noisily and shake their bridled heads. The coming of the sun is every one's alarm gong; sets every one to his business of the day.

Nor is there hush of midnight. If the moon is full, towns may be empty, but beaches, forests, and lagoons will be gay with black folk and white, picnicking, fishing, riding, walking, well into the small hours. And in the still, star-jeweled times that come between moon and moon there will be enough love wandering going on to give a thrill of movement to the darkest night.

For solitude you must look to the sun. In the fierce hours that run between one and three no one stirs out who is not obliged. To this time of the day belongs by right the feeling of solitude, of Cortez-like discovery, that the early-morning wanderer seeks in colder lands. And in these hours, shielded by noon's white fire, go people who have secret errands on hand. Sometimes they are lovers who have no right to love . . . Is not He safe behind mosquito nets and screens till the sun touches

the green tops of the hills? Is not She lying imprisoned, frail, heat-hypnotized, on her veranda couch, the novel fallen on the floor, the brown girl fanning, fanning? . . . Sometimes they are native servants sent with notes, not meant to be carried in the busy, observant hours. Sometimes they are girls who slip away from chaperons — as I did.

To tell the truth, and to use the slang I used, I was " fed up " with Lorraine. Since Luke's departure, now a week past, she had scarcely let me go out of her sight without inquiring where I was going. Why I wanted to go there, and (usually) proposing that she or Dinah should go, too. This, in spite of the fact that Harry England had taken his ship (brought up to meet him from Sydney) out of harbor the very day after the dance, and that nobody had heard of him since, nor did any one expect to hear soon, since he had cleared for Papeete, a fortnight's journey away.

Besides, I had done nothing that any one could blame. What was it, put into words? I had danced once with Captain England. I had exchanged about a dozen words with him. I had defended him, in his absence, when Luke began talking unkindly and uncharitably about him. Should I on that account have been hunted and harried as I was being hunted and harried? (So I put it to myself.) Why, I had not even made objection when Dinah and Lorraine began writing out lists of clothes for my trousseau, and sending them off to Sydney. (I need not say that Dinah did none of the writing; she merely helped with comments, such as: " Two dozen of everything, Miss Lorraine, because once the northwest begins, you're all of a presbyterian as soon as the sun's up, and wants two shifts a day."

"Have one of the dresses that lovely brown color, Miss Lorraine; Kaffir legs they call it" (a near enough shot at the then modish "café au lait"). And of course —"A nice thin black piece or so can be put away in the wardrobe, and you never know when it won't be wanted. You're getting as thin as a rasher, Miss Lorraine, and as for me, I don't seem to fancy my meals as much as I used to . . ."

Had I ever interfered with this chosen amusement of Dinah and my aunt? Had I ever omitted to wear Luke's little, worn-out ring on my smallest finger, and the new aquamarine and diamond hoop on the third? Had I even in my own mind any intention of "backing out"? No — not since Harry England sailed for Port Hervey in the *Queen of the Islands* without a look, or a letter, or a word . . . I even discussed the question of the ceremony. I told Lorraine and Dinah everything that my married friends had said about the impossibility of legally marrying at the absurd age of twelve; (Lorraine's silence on that point and her curious looks puzzled me; but I passed them by as unimportant). I had agreed to Dinah's suggestion that "Mr. Luke" and I should be "registered by the government" instead of being married again by a clergyman. I had done everything everybody wanted me to do; and if my heart seemed all on fire within, and if I spent half the nights crying, with my head out on my window sill to feel the wild sea breeze sweep up from those unknown worlds whither Harry England had sailed — nobody knew. Nobody should know. That was my resolve.

But, nevertheless, I was chaperoned and overchaperoned. So, on a white-hot afternoon, at the impossible hour of two, I put on my largest hat, took an umbrella, and, shod with silence and with

tennis shoes, slipped out by the back way. I was going to call on the Queen.

Lalua had always been kind to me (I think she admired my copper hair; all brown people have a special fancy for copper-haired and red-haired folk), and now and again she would send me an island present — a dinner, done up in banana leaves and mats; sucking pig, fowl, "palolo" sea worms; "palusani" of taro leaf and cocoanut cream; a bucket of turtle eggs; a plume of silvery "reva-reva" for my hair. Of course, instructed by Lorraine, I sent her presents in return. This last time Lalua had been amazingly generous. Her maid of honor, the cream-colored, pretty Maiera, had brought me only a day or two past quite a load of wonderful things: shell necklaces of rose and amber color; crowns of carved mother-of-pearl; hats finer than the finest Panama, plaited by Lalua's own house maidens, and — most interesting of all — a tiny packet of banana leaf, tied up with yellow spider silk, and containing one huge, perfect, rose-colored pearl, enveloped in a wrapper of finest reva-reva tissue. On the tissue some one had written with a delicately pointed pen:

"From the Queen of the Islands to the Queen of Hearts."

Some one? Lalua, of course. She was the Queen of the Islands, even if twice deposed. She was fond of joking, in a stately way, about my popularity among the white lads of Hawonga. Yes, it was undoubtedly Lalua. I was so sure of that that I did not even ask Lorraine. Besides it wasn't necessary to show the packet to her at all. I had "palmed" it, like a conjuror, in opening the basket. I didn't know why. It had looked as if it were meant to be "palmed"— that was all.

And now, beneath the fiery shield of midday, through the white, deserted streets, and along hot lanes scented with climbing stephanotis, honeysuckle, and jasmine, I was hurrying to see Lalua, and to thank her.

The palace of the Queen stood some way outside the town. It was a handsome building, two-storied, verandaed, arcaded, made of white coral blocks. It had, as I knew, plenty of European furniture inside; four-post beds (never slept in), dining tables (on which no meal was ever laid), great gilded chairs in which no one had ever sat. It had chandeliers of tinkling glass, always unlighted, probably unlightable. It was always shown to strangers proudly; and after it had been shown, and refreshments had been served on the terrace outside, and good-bys said, Lalua the Queen used to shut it and lock it all up, and go — home.

Home was a nice, low, comfortable reed hut just beyond the palace enclosure, handy to the beach for fishing, and unencumbered with tiresome windows, which only let in the light and annoyed you when you wanted to sleep. Home hadn't any furniture to speak of except the great ironwood, native-made sofa that stood under the thatched veranda roof, looking down on the lagoon; queens had to have an ironwood sofa, even if they didn't sit on it, just as they had to have a turtle or so for style. Home had a proper kava bowl, big as a sponge bath, wherein the great Pacific drink might be brewed of nights; a row of dinner mats, to put the banana leaf plates on, fresh and fresh at each meal; a bed with an immense patchwork quilt; cooking pots a few. No more. Lalua the Queen chose to have it so. She was in this like almost all the island sovereigns of her day.

Lalua the Queen was not asleep when I came up the sanded pathway leading to her house. I had known she would not be. She usually passed the hours from twelve (which was dinner hour) until about four, sitting on her state sofa of ironwood, with her turtle beside her, doing nothing whatever. Lalua the Queen would not have understood Shakespeare's foolish remarks about the "infinite heart's-ease" that kings neglect, and "private men enjoy." Lalua would have seen no good in being a king, or a queen, if you could not sit half the day listening to the sea on the reef, and the sea wind in the palms, drinking a cup of kava now and then, but for the most part savoring the joy of utter idleness.

I might have been island bred, instead of only island born, for the sympathy that I had with all such views of life. Lorraine, that spirit of fire, had but little in common with me. I did not care for study; I read unwillingly all things save poetry; I hated rule and order, though my life had been ruled and ordered ever since I could remember. I could, and did, sit with Lalua the Queen sometimes, smoking a (strictly forbidden) cigarette, looking out on the wondrous green of the lagoon, listening to the hypnotic murmur of the reef, and neither talking nor (I believe) thinking for an hour at a time.

I did so now. She was sitting on her sofa of state, her eyes (beautiful eyes yet, in spite of her five and forty years)

"Fixed upon the far sea line"

and she barely greeted me as I came in. But I knew she was glad to see me. I dropped to the floor, and, sitting native fashion, cross-legged, my head against Lalua's knees, I dreamed. . . .

It must have been an hour or more before Maiera came in with cocoanuts for us. She had been asleep on the back veranda. It is etiquette in the Hawongas, and in many other islands, to open drinking nuts in the presence of the guest. There have been times when the life of the guest depended on it.

Maiera took the husked nuts, rough spheres of fibrous white, from the boy who had cleaned them, stuck a knife point into two out of the three eyes of each, and handed one to Lalua, and the other to me. I watched her idly. I saw nothing out of the common in anything she did. But when I had drunk the cool, sweet water, and was tilting the nut to get the final drops, I felt something small and hard roll down the interior and touch my lip. I was so astonished that I opened my mouth to speak, and immediately the small, hard thing slipped into it.

I dropped it on my hand, and behold, it was a pearl; a perfect, rose-colored pearl of the rarest kind, large as a falcon's eye — the match, in every detail, of the pearl that I had at that moment in my pocket.

I had not been brought up in the islands without knowing that the value of a rare pearl is more than doubled — more than trebled, sometimes — if you can find its mate. These pearls, so matched, were fit for the ears of any princess in Europe. You could not see them as anything but earrings. And my ears were pierced — had been pierced two years ago, by Lalua herself, at my special request, because I had a little pair of hook earrings, once my mother's, and wanted to wear them. They were pearls — but with what a difference!

"O Lalua, Lalua!" I cried. "People say that you and Maiera are sorceresses, and I think it must be true. How did you enchant this pearl into the

cocoanut? And the other — I never thanked you for that — but I'm afraid I sha'n't be allowed to keep it."

Lalua took up the cocoanut, looked it over and under, peered in, and set it down with a smile.

"In the island, strange things happen, sometime," she observed.

"Why aren't you allowed to keep pearls?" asked Maiera abruptly. She spoke much better English than the Queen.

"Oh," I stammered, suddenly embarrassed, "because — because Lorraine did not like me to take valuable presents — It was always boys who sent them."

"Well, no boy have sent dis. One I have give you, de other — ah, well, dat is sorcery of Maiera, bad girl," remarked the Queen, entirely without emotion. "Maiera, if you had live fifty years ago, I t'ink dey have tied you in a canoe wit' a hole in it, and send you out to sea."

"They are lovely — lovely," I murmured, staring at the wonderful gems, so unlike any I had ever seen in my life. ("You wanted to know," said some inner voice, "what he would give, if ever he . . .") "But I don't know how I shall get them set."

"Maiera, you will perhaps make more magic," said the Queen, leaning her head, with its short, curly hair, on her hand, and looking at me oddly.

Maiera took the two gems, and disappeared. She was away some minutes. When she came back, the pearls were set. They had been circled round with very thick gold wire, and the wire had been bent into hooks. It was a barbaric, yet a beautiful arrangement. The wire was highly polished, and

perfectly cold. Neither heat nor tool had been used in the task of setting.

Take some gold wire, thick as a small quill; try to bend it, without heat or tools, without dimming the luster of its polish, into small delicate shapes, perfectly fashioned — and tell me, when it is done, whether you would not prefer the well-known feats of tearing a pack of cards asunder, of bending an iron bar. But, unless your strength is as the strength of ten, do not try it at all.

"How you like Maiera's magic?" asked the Queen, bending forward, her head still on her hand, her eyes — full, brilliant eyes of the true South Sea type — piercing me through.

For answer, I put the earrings in my ears, sprang up from the floor with one movement, and ran out to the back of the house. There was no one, and nothing, there. It would have been just possible for some one mounted on a bicycle — or some one on a horse — or some one who . . . I did not finish that . . . to gain the shelter of the palm grove behind the house, while I was crossing from one room to another. . . .

"Magic," said Maiera's voice.

"The sun is going down," I said. I felt strangely disappointed, almost chilled. These women were playing tricks on me.

"It is time I got home," I said. "Lorraine will want me for my walk." I said good-by to Lalua, thanked her, more formally than I had yet done, for her many beautiful presents, and hurried back to the cottage among the bougainvillæas. I took care to slip in by the back way, and to make no noise in gaining my room. There was just a chance that my absence might not have been observed. . . .

At my door I was checked by the sound of some one moving about within. Had I been caught . . . I picked up a wrapper that was hanging on the veranda, and fled to the bathroom. A minute later, Lorraine came to the door.

"Is that you inside there, Dara?" she called.

"Yes," I answered her, splashing vigorously with my hands.

"The Garstangs have called."

"In a minute," I replied. I occupied the minute in taking off my outdoor clothes, and getting into the wrapper. With my hair down, and my face convincingly wet, I opened the door, and came out. "She will think," I said to myself, "that I was sleeping, and went for a bath when I woke up. . . ."

Lorraine eyed me curiously.

"What's the matter?" I asked her. "I sha'n't be a minute dressing. You know I always like a bath at this time."

"Do you always," inquired Lorraine, "bathe with pearl earrings on?" Then, without pausing for an answer, she walked away.

"My God!" I said, clapping my hands to my ears. The great pink pearls were still there. "Now," I thought, "the fat will be in the fire." But it was not. When I came into the drawing room, earringless, my aunt did not so much as look at me. She was busy, apparently, talking to the family of the Resident.

Later, when we passed each other on the veranda, she gave me a perfectly inexplicable look. If it had not been impossible, I should have said that something had happened, during the afternoon, to please her. . . .

But her chaperonage was not lightened. She seemed to watch me, so to speak, with her teeth set,

defying anything in heaven or earth to make her relax for a moment.

A day or two later — I do not quite know when — I had a call from Maiera. In the Hawongas there is not the keen feeling about color that one finds in islands governed by Australia. New Zealand, with her own Maori people, has never been over-sensitive in these matters. Colored wives of white men, legally married; half-castes of respectable life; the brown royalties of Hawonga — all these were on our visiting lists in Port Hervey. I do not think that we, or the colored folk, were any the worse for it.

Maiera, legal daughter of an island princess and an English sailor (both dead), had been brought up in the royal circle. She had been educated at a school in Tahiti, but had spent most of her life under Lalua's immediate care. She could read and write perfectly, play the piano, and was no mean artist with the pencil or the brush. She was exceedingly pretty — more than pretty, indeed; she was, like many Eastern Island half-castes, beautiful. Her profile was singularly sharp and clear, like something on a coin; she had black silky hair that waved more deeply than any human hair I have ever seen, and eyelashes so long that one could hardly believe they were real. Her skin was the color of fresh cream. At the time of which I speak, she must have been about my own age, seventeen, but looked, and in all essentials was, quite twenty-five.

She had hardly ever been to see me, and I felt pleased when she walked languishingly — Maiera always seemed to move as if she were just going to dance — down the long veranda where I was sitting, half-reclined on a Colombo chair, with a book in my hand, and a basket of mangoes beside me. They

were Papeete mangoes, each as big as the crown of a hat, pale green, satiny, with a pink flush on each round cheek; they were cold from the ice chest, dead ripe, and smelt like heaven.

Maiera greeted me courteously.

"Ah, that is the first of the mangoes," she said, looking at my basket. "Lalua's are not yet ripe."

The hint was too strong to be disregarded, even if I had wished. I asked her to have some; Maiera said they would soil her dress — which was undeniably true; if you are to enjoy a mango, you must eat it in your bath — so people say — or at least without regard for your clothing. It followed, naturally, that I invited her to come up to my bedroom, and leave her handsome robe of white silk and lace on my bed while she ate the fruit. Lorraine, who was going briskly about her housekeeping, told a native boy to fetch us plates, knives, and spoons; and, with the mangoes, we retired to my room for one of those fruit orgies that island people know. I will allow that Maiera and I were sensuous little beasts; but in the islands, one becomes greedy about fruit to an extent that English people can scarcely understand.

Lalua's maid of honor had never been in my bedroom before. When we had finished all the mangoes, and had washed ourselves and put on our dresses again, she began roaming about and looking at my little treasures — pictures, shells, bits of coral, photographs in silver frames. She stopped dead before one of Luke — an old one, taken when he was only fifteen — and began staring at it.

"Ah, Heaven!" she cooed, "even then, he was a lovely boy; but now, he is — So you are very, very much in love with him, little Dara, and soon

you are to be married. When did you first fall in love?"

"It was all — all — arranged," I stammered, "before I came to Hawonga."

"But you were very young, my Dara," went on Maiera in her cooing voice. "No white girl falls in love so young."

I stared at her; I was wax in her clever hands. She seemed to be a century older than I; she seemed to have deep cisterns of wisdom at her command — wisdom unguessed at, even, by me. I wondered how much she really knew. . . .

"I'm getting my trousseau," was all that I could manage, in self-defense. "Wouldn't you like to see the things Lorraine has given me?"

When two girls get together, there can be but one answer to such a question. We were deep, at once, in the contents of camphor-wood boxes — embroidered silk wrappers from the Japanese store; delicate underlinen, ribboned and laced; shoes, nests of silk stockings set together like many-colored eggs. Some of the boxes were small; these held a variety of things — jewelry, trinkets, letters. . . .

"Ah, ah, ah!" cried Maiera, snatching at a packet tied with a ribbon, and beginning to dance round the room. "I have his letters to you; what will you give me for them?"

"Nothing; I'll slap you well," I cried, and began chasing her. We ragged and romped all over the room for some time, and at last fell breathless on my bed together. The letters, all tumbled and disarranged, were in my hand. I valued them, partly as a Red Indian may value his chain of scalps, and partly because I was really fond of the writer. I tied them up again with their faded ribbon, noticing as I did so how much yellower the outer letter

was than the white sheets within; and then I put them away in their box.

Maiera seemed suddenly tired, now. She gave an unrestrained yawn or two, said it was too hot for all this romping, went to the glass, and rearranged her lovely hair. "I must be going home," she said. "Lalua will need me. Thank you, little Dara, for showing me your pretty things, and for giving me all those mangoes. No, I go by the window, it is the shortest way." And her silk robe fluttered down the garden walk, among the bougainvillæas and the beds of white gardenia and tuberose, out of sight.

"When did she go?" asked Lorraine by and by.

"Quite a while ago," I said.

"What did she come for?"

"Only to call."

Dinah was stringing beans on another veranda, within hearing of Lorraine and myself.

"Call indeed," she echoed, "I like her obesity." (Dinah never to my recollection troubled herself much about the meaning of a word, provided it had a good round ring.) "A black woman like her calling on my young lady. She didn't call for nothing, I'll lay. Did you miss anything of your jewelry, Miss Dara?"

"What nonsense you talk," I said. "Maiera has far more jewelry than I."

"Then if she has, she has took something she hasn't got more of," opined Dinah. She stripped a bean viciously, as though it were Maiera. "I'd like to go through her clothes," she said.

I, not approving of her tone, countered with the universal island question:

"When do you think the steamer'll be in?"

. . . . . .

The steamer came next day. It was now nearly two weeks since Luke had left Hawonga, and there had been no news from Hiliwa Dara, though we had been able to send one mail. I knew, however, that it was possible to hear by the boat. This run she had to call at an island which was only fifty miles away from my old home — an annual call, undertaken to bring and return native laborers — and it would be easy to send the Hiliwa Dara cutter out to meet her.

Lorraine, too, expected to hear of Luke. "I don't think he'll hurry back though," she said. "There has been more than carelessness with that overseer. Arthur was right — always right — when he said that absent plantation owners were an invitation to dishonesty."

"Yes, father was right," I agreed. As a plantation owner myself, I pretended to as much knowledge as could easily be acquired on such subjects. I had seen, as every South Sea dweller has seen, again and again, the too familiar phenomenon of the plantation manager who gives himself the airs of a proprietor; who lives in a two-thousand-pound style on a five-hundred-pound salary, and keeps, nevertheless, on strangely friendly terms with the stores. I know the tales about palms that did not produce, and plantation machinery that broke down and had to be replaced, and mythical cases of benzine used on mythical runs. . . . The parable of the unjust steward finds acceptance, in a too-literal sense, all over the Pacific world, where distances are long and mails are few, and the standard of honesty never very high.

So I was not surprised when the mail came in, and among the letters fetched from the post office by Dinah — who never would trust any one but her-

self with this duty — was one written by Luke, and dated from Hiliwa Dara, saying that he had found things in a very bad state indeed, and was even considering whether it was not a case for prosecution. In any case, all the books had to be gone into thoroughly, all the correspondence overhauled, and many investigations made. He could not hope to return to the Hawongas before another month.

This letter was addressed to Lorraine. It mentioned another, written to myself. We immediately began hunting for it in the pile of correspondence, found it — and found also a third. Luke had apparently written to me twice. One letter, like Lorraine's, was on the Hiliwa Dara note, the other, which was very thick, was enclosed in an ordinary gray envelope such as I supposed the delinquent overseer might have had.

I have all my life been clairvoyant about letters. It is not a very uncommon gift, and I make no boast of it; though I have a special reason for mentioning it here. Like you, and other people, I could often feel the tenor of a letter before I had opened it. I have felt the rush and uplift of good news long before my eyes fell upon it. I have felt my heart sink like a stone at the touch of some evil happening not yet learned by my conscious mind. But when I took the thick, second letter in my hand, I was not aware of any feeling about it. I could not " read " it through the envelope. For a moment, I almost fancied that Luke had enclosed some papers about the plantation — some indifferent thing or other — in a cover, and sent them to me, in addition to his usual letter. But I remembered that business matters would have been sent — as apparently they had been — to Lorraine.

I had never been in the habit of pocketing Luke's

letters, and running away to enjoy them in secret. You other girls with lovers will think this significant. Perhaps it was — I don't know. At all events, I proceeded to open my two letters, immediately after Lorraine had read hers.

The first had been written as soon as he arrived. It was full of the accounts of his doings, plans, ideas in the matter of the plantation; business details were left out, but many personal ones included. He spoke a little of the house, and what he meant to do with it "by and by." He hinted, delightedly, at a secret he had, which would soon be no secret at all, and which was going to make both of us rich; much richer than my father, or old Ivory, had ever guessed. The letter ended with the usual expressions of kindness and of love; no less, no more. I folded it and put it away; it aroused in me no emotions whatever.

But the second —

I had hardly read six lines before I knew what it was. I was sitting, but I sprang to my feet, and continued to read, standing. As I turned the first page, and came upon the second and third, I began to walk up and down the room, reading as I went. I saw Lorraine and Dinah watching me, amazed.

. . . I finished the sheets, crushed them up in my hand, and flung them at Lorraine. They struck her in the face. I don't know even now why I did it. It seems impossible that I could have guessed at anything . . . then . . .

"Luke has thrown me over," I said, and ran out of the room. I saw, as I went, that Dinah and Lorraine were gathering up the sheets of the letter, scattered by my hand, and putting them together.

"Read it," I cried. "Send it round the town and show it if you like. He's jilted me."

It was twelve o'clock, and hot as only a December morning of the tropics can be. I do not know how I escaped sunstroke, running hatless as I did through the town, by alleys and back gardens, so as not to be seen; reaching the palace of Queen Lalua breathless, perspiring, with my coils of copper hair so heated by the strong overhead sun that they almost scorched my fingers when I felt at the sides of my head, to see if my earrings had not fallen out, in that wild rush. I remembered my earrings, my rose-pearl earrings, as a drowning man may, dimly, remember the belt of gold that clasps his waist, even while he is sinking into unknown depths. Little though I knew it, those earrings were enacting the part of the belt of gold. It was they that were dragging me down into the maelstrom.

I was furious and despairing. There might have been a thread of some very different emotion at the bottom of my mind, indeed, I am sure there was — but for the moment it was buried; and I could only realize that my Luke, my property, the boy who had solemnly promised himself to me, the youth who asked nothing better than to devote his life to caring for little Dara, had abandoned his trust; had thrown away that which, only two short weeks ago, seemed of all things upon earth most precious to him. In all my life my vanity, my pride of a pretty girl, had never received such a shock. Whatever I might feel, I had been as certain of his feeling as of the stars that watched above the earth.

Lalua the Queen, when I burst into the cool reed house that stood beneath the shadow of the palace, was dining. A chicken lay on a large green leaf before her; a heap of custard apples and mangoes was piled up in a delicate Niue basket at her side. Even in that moment I recognized, with some aston-

ishment, that the mangoes were Lalua's own, from her great garden — the finest in Hawonga; the mangoes that — yesterday — had not been ripe . . . But these were dead ripe, every one!

I had no time, even if I had had the inclination, to puzzle over trifles of the kind.

Lalua rose and, providently taking a chicken leg in one hand, motioned me with the other to the inner chamber, where her great bed, with its silk and velvet quilt of a thousand patches, was the only piece of furniture. It was pleasantly dusk in there; the only light that there was came sifted through walls of woven cane, save where the doorways made two oblongs filled with white-hot sun and sea. There was no sound save the dying whisper of the reef at far low tide, and of humming green-tressed ironwoods that sighed and sang, as they always do day in, day out, in that creamy South Sea world.

" Of old, unhappy, far-off things . . ."

I flung myself on the bed. Lalua had known I would, Lalua had read what the matter was, before I was fairly up her veranda steps.

" Luke has thrown me over," I said for the second time. And I began to cry. Anger was dying down, but beyond words I was hurt, humiliated.

Maiera came in from the back of the house. She sat down on the floor, waving her plaited fan.

" Tell the Queen and me," she said. " Tell us everything."

Lalua, thoughtfully nibbling her chicken bone, had seated herself on the mats beside Maiera.

" I haven't the letter," I said, wiping my eyes. " But —"

" Who has it? " asked Lalua.

" Lorraine — Dinah — I don't know. It doesn't

matter. It is a long letter, but it just means one thing — that I haven't turned out as he thought I would, and he declines to carry out — his — to marry me. Oh, he doesn't want to have anything more to do with me. Of course he could if he — liked; it was aranged so — but I never thought."

"How you mean, arranged?" asked Lalua, bending forward. Her brief black curls, gray-sprinkled, fell upon her neck. Her eyes were shadowed; I could not see them.

"Well, as he's spoken of it — and rejected it — I shall speak too, because the oath has been broken," I declared. And sitting up, my tears forgotten for the moment, I told them the whole tale of the strange wedding at Hiliwa Dara, six years ago.

When I had finished, Lalua the Queen got up from the floor, and leaned across the bed, to laugh loudly and at her ease. Maiera, young and supple, flung herself prone on the mats, and rolled in an ecstasy of mirth. They exchanged a few words in some island tongue that I did not know, and laughed still more. . . .

Somehow, they made me understand why it was that old Ivory had exacted that oath on the Bible that seemed to me so foolish — nearly six years ago. I did not like their bearing — I did not know why.

Lalua saw. She sobered down, with another word or two to Maiera.

"Foolish, foolish little girl!" she said to me. "Dat was only play. Dat was to make sure you marry Luke Ivory some day or oder. No law in dat."

"Are you sure you know?" I asked dubiously.

Lalua, who was standing now, drew herself up to her full six feet.

"I, Queen of Hawonga all my life, and not to

know de law?" she said. "Not my law, dat one, true; but I know him. When de Englis' take my country from me, dey make deir own law. Not so good as mine. New Zealan', she take de country again, and make anoder law; still not a good law, but I know him. No white women marry if she not sixteen year old, Englis' law, New Zealan' law."

"But!" I objected, remembering dimly something long forgotten, "they said it had been registered at Hawonga. I did wonder why nobody knew anything about it, if it was."

Lalua and Maiera looked at one another.

"When de New Zealanders took my country from de Englis'," said Lalua, "dey take de old register, and keep him in Wellington; den dey make new one demselves."

"That is how it has happened," agreed Maiera. "But it was no good registering it anyhow, my Dara. You are no more married than I am."

"Never were you," proclaimed Lalua. "I, Lalua Queen, say it."

"Anyhow," I said, bursting into tears again, "he has thrown me over, and it is the meanest thing I ever heard of in my life, though he says it is for my good and my happiness."

"Oh, you little fool!" cried Maiera, springing to her feet, and standing erect in the patch of fierce light that slanted in from the door, "you are as blind as a flying fox that flies in the daytime. Lalua, this one knows nothing, for all she has lived in a Love Island five years. She doesn't know what a man means when he says he is giving up a girl for her own good."

"What does he mean?" I asked wonderingly.

"Tell her," said Maiera to the Queen.

"Always," chanted Lalua, in the sing-song tone

she used when speaking seriously, " always, he mean anoder girl."

" Oh! " I screamed.

" She's no girl, anyhow," said Maiera, lighting a cigarette. " Better have one, Dara, you want it."

" What do you mean? " I asked her, stretching out my hand for the cigarette. I did indeed want it badly.

" By saying she's no girl! I mean truth. She's old enough to be his mother."

" Oh — you don't mean — you don't mean — Lorraine? "

" Who else? " was Maiera's contemptuous reply. " She fell in love with him the minute she saw him. So did that little fool Mabelle — but he never noticed her. . . . Didn't you hear how he said good-by to Lorraine? Didn't you see how she made him dance with her? And she —"

" She getting old," sing-songed Lalua. " When a woman getting old, she like the young man wit' blue eyes. She like him good. Luke Ivory, young and good and blue eye, Lorraine she love him. I t'ink she have been writing to him. Man he good and very, very young, he like woman like Lorraine, all fire. You very, very pretty, Dara, but you no fire. He forget you very quick, if he see Lorraine wanting him."

" It seems quite clear to me, my Dara," commented Maiera, puffing slowly at her cigarette. " Why do you trouble? You don't love Luke Ivory. You read his letters before every one. You keep them in a bundle and never open them — Ah, I saw the outside one was all yellow, and the inside ones were white! Why do you mind? "

" I don't mind! " I cried, clenching my hands. " I don't mind, but I — but — I —"

"You want to make him mind," finished Maiera for me, as if the desire was almost too natural and obvious to need mentioning. "What will you give me, little Dara, if I tell you how to break his heart in pieces, and make him eat dirt for shame?"

"I don't know," I said, my voice sinking. I was tired out. I did not quite like her tone.

Lalua the Queen saw it.

"You shall get on this bed again, and you shall go to sleep," she pronounced. "I will make de magic, and you sleep as if you are drowned at de bottom of de sea."

Lalua's magic was nothing more than mesmeric passes and touches, but she was, it seemed, a mistress of the art. I slept almost at once. Late in the day I woke, refreshed and steadied, ready to go home, and even to meet Lorraine.

"Do not let her know," counseled Maiera. "She will acknowledge nothing. She will try and make you think she is sorry for you. Tell her no more than you have told. And —"

She bent over to whisper to me:

"To-night, when the moon is down, come here."

. . . . . .

CHAPTER X

I FOUND Lorraine on the cool north side of the veranda, sitting under the shade of a climbing passion-fruit vine. It was late in the afternoon; the dropping sun shot through the tapestry of leafage, turning it wine-yellow, and lighting up the ripened fruit into necklaces of gems, egg-shaped, amethyst-colored. Lorraine, against this background of splendor, looked less somber than was her wont. I noticed, with eyes made suddenly keen, that her dress was not all black; I remembered that of late it very seldom had been. To-day, it was so gauzy and light in texture that it showed the white underslip clearly; in its substance there were little flowers of green, and the underskirt was threaded with vivid green ribbon. She had another green ribbon wound through the tower of her dark hair.

I had come upon her suddenly; she was not prepared. For an instant, before the shutter of her reserve swung to, I caught a glimpse of what she was thinking, feeling, doing, alone there on the quiet veranda, on the day that had seen Luke's unlooked-for desertion of me.

She was thinking pleasant things, with her lips apart and soft, as the lips of one who dreams. She was singing a little, sweet sad song, quietly, to herself. She was doing the most amazing thing that Lorraine had ever done, in my lifelong knowledge of her — nothing at all.

My aunt, I think, had been educated after a somewhat old-fashioned pattern, and was a little

behind the times in which she lived. Duty, restraint, reserve, had been the watchwords of her youth; industry — an industry that seemed to me, the child of a later time, almost insane — was her eleventh commandment. She never read or let me read novels of a morning (to this day, so strong is the effect of her training, I cannot enjoy a pleasant book until after lunch). She never showed her feelings, if she could help it. She never sat unemployed — unless when she was talking to or entertaining some one; and in that case, as often as not, she would pull a bit of embroidery out of her pocket, and work at it while talking. The embroidery might be no good to any created being; the empty hours before twelve which she filled up gardening, or piano-playing, might just as well have been employed reading some masterpiece of fiction. But those were Lorraine's principles, and principles were to her as the tables of stone to Moses — sacred things, not to be broken without fear of grave disaster. . . .

Now, to-day, one at least of Lorraine's stone tables lay shivered at her feet. She was lounging, lazing, and idling; she was actually dreaming. . . . "The habit of dreaming," I had often heard her say, "eats into the roots of self-control. . . ."

I stood at the top of the veranda steps, and regarded her with critical, hard eyes. She felt them. She looked up.

Down went the blind; she sat straight up in her chair.

"Where have you been?" she said.

But the governess bond was broken. I stood where I was at the top of the steps, and looked her in the eyes, coolly, as I had never looked at Lorraine, before I answered:

"Where I chose to go."

There was a moment's silence. Battles are fought in such moments; campaigns are lost and won.

Lorraine, as I have said, was cleverer than I. She saw her defeat instantly; more, she saw its cause — the cause that could never be mentioned between us two. . . . With the grace that was always characteristic of her, she swept out of a difficult position, and resumed the small portion of authority now tenable.

"My dear child," she said, "you have burned your face to a cinder; do go at once and put on some white-rose cream."

"It's not only sun," I said calmly. "Some of it is crying. I've been crying out. I've done. I don't mean to cry any more."

"No?" said Lorraine, watching me behind the shutters of her cool reserve. "Did Luke mean so little to you?"

"It doesn't matter what he meant or didn't mean, when he has behaved like that," I said.

"It is strange," said Lorraine musingly. "It does not seem just like him. . . . I'm afraid you must have hurt his feelings rather badly, Dara, somehow or other."

"If I did, he took some time to find it out," I answered her. That fact had hurt me more than anything. If he had dashed off a hasty letter, in a fit of jealousy — but to write as usual, and then, on cool consideration, to reverse what he had said, and retire from the position! No, one could not be expected to take such an insult meekly.

I could see her hunting in her mind for reasons. I could see her catch sight of one possible reason — half hidden in a thicket of perhapses and maybes. . . .

"Let her!" I thought scornfully. "And let him. They're both fools enough."

I went to my room. It did not seem the room that I had left that morning; things did not look the same. A young, silly girl had lived in that room. I was so much older than she. . . .

It was going on towards evening now; from the breast of the lagoon a little cold sunset wind came creeping, creeping, up to my veranda. It smelled of the open sea. The open sea! Oh, word of magic! Think of your magic word, and what it has meant to you. "The open sea" was mine.

I stood in the middle of the room, and my pulses seemed to shake my body, from shoe sole up to hair.

"To-night," I said to myself. And again, as if it were a spell to raise some spirit of water or of wind —"The open sea" . . .

. . . . . .

The moon, that had been high and full on the night of the Residency dance, was now in her last half. Not till near morning did that tired, waning light lift over the crests of the pale green island hills. I knew, of course, as Pacific folk do know, just where she was on her journey, and I went to bed very early, so as to be sure of waking up at the right time, late in the night, towards morning.

I roused myself without difficulty from a chaos of wild dreams, as soon as the tired light came creeping through my mosquito net, low down where the dawn would break in another hour or two. I put on my black frock — a dance dress of fine lace — and wrapped my bright, betraying head, and white shoulders, in a black silk scarf. My shoes I took in my hand. They were high-heeled, and far from silent. I could have worn flat tennis shoes, but I would

rather have died that night. Perhaps some girl who reads this may guess why.

As a finish to my toilette, I took a small carving knife from the kitchen, and stuck it in the satin belt of my dress. I knew Hawonga too well to trust myself alone on her love-perfumed highways, at night, without some such protection.

White shadows passed me in the moon-streaked twilight as I slipped, shoeless, veiled, along the thick dust of the roadway, that still kept its daytime heat. The scent of crushed tiéré flowers, worn by all island girls, came now and then from some dusk opening among the trees. I seemed to have slipped back centuries — æons of time — from my daytime self, Lorraine's restrained, calm pupil. This was my country, so I thought, as I sped silently forward, safe under the dark dress and disguising veil — this dim, starlight, moonlight world, full of delicate, cold scents, and elfin colors. Why could one not live in it all the time? It was there all the time, though one might, foolishly, choose to live in the twin, hateful world of day. Its very names were haunting . . . "Midnight," "moonlight," "the stars." . . . If such a world were open to one once in ten — five — years, how eagerly one would grasp the chance of visiting it! And yet it was there all the time, and one spent the hours of entrance to that magic realm in brutish, foolish sleep.

All this, I was certain, no one had ever thought before. That the night-wandering self which I had just discovered was so old a discovery as to have its own full cycle of legends and literature, I never guessed. One does not, at seventeen.

When I came to the house by the palace of the Queen, it was all lit up. This did not much surprise me; island folk go by no clock but that of their

own inclinations. Probably Lalua had not yet been to bed, and did not intend going till the sun rose. Still, I thought the amount of lighting was a little bit out of the common; instead of the usual, sole hurricane lamp, there were a score or two of brown cocoanut shells, filled with cocoanut oil, and floating each a wick of plaited wild cotton. These were set about the rails of the veranda, and tied to the door-posts. There were palm leaves, too, fastened upright to the pillars of the house.

"Something is going on," I thought. I pulled the scarf off my head, and paused a moment at the door to smooth my hair, put on my shoes, and placed a cluster of star-white stephanotis, plucked from the side of the house, behind each ear. I took care to adjust the flowers so as not to hide my earrings — my wonderful new earrings, which (of course) Lalua the Queen had given me. If you ask me whether I knew the significance of flowers so worn, I will answer — perfectly. A flower behind each ear means: "I have a lover, and I am going to meet him." . . .

I say that I knew this, but I persuaded myself that I did not; or, at any rate, that nobody would suppose I did; or finally, if any one did suppose so, that the custom could not be held to apply to white people. . . .

Inside Queen Lalua's house, upon the fine mats of her floor, were seated all the kings and queens of Hawonga.

There were several of them — kings of the outer islands, who lived for the most part at Port Hervey, because the salary paid them by Government, as a sop to wounded pride of royalty, was more quickly and agreeably spent there — queens of the other side of Hawonga, two of them, sub-queens to Lalua,

as one might say; a visiting king from another Pacific group, who had come up by the last steamer; a princess or so; Maiera, and Lalua herself.

They were all sitting round Lalua's immense kava bowl, cut out of a single tree trunk, which was the pride of the Hawongas. Tourists invariably wanted to buy it; some had been known to offer as much as ten shillings for it. Lalua would not have taken a diamond necklace for the dark, polished basin, four feet across, standing on a forest of small legs, and lined with the lovely, inimitable oyster-blue enamel that comes only of a hundred years or so of kava-making and holding. She never had it out save on great occasions. This was clearly one.

I supposed, at first, that they were waiting for me. All the kings and queens were sitting cross-legged, their limbs folded up in the graceful native way that is so impossible to whites; their skirts and tunics of rich silk, their nightdress robes of velvet making a splendor of scarlet and yellow and emerald on the dusky brown of the mats. They were not talking at all, and no one had yet begun to pound the immense kava root that stood leaning against the wall. Kava is pounded, not chewed, in the Hawongas, and has been so from time immemorial.

I took my seat on the mats, folding my limbs as neatly as I could, and bowing to the silent company. Some of them bowed in return, holding on their crowns as they did so. Lalua merely smiled. She had more sense of dignity.

Maiera got up and dropped down behind me. She looked wonderfully well that night. Her robe, long and loose and very flimsy, was made of geranium-colored stuff edged with gold. She had a wreath of scarlet double bibiscus in her hair. I think she must have poured quite half a bottle of del-

icate jasmine scent over her head; but the concert of violent perfumes that rose from the assembled royalties — opoponac, musk, bergamot, jockey club, new-mown hay — almost extinguished its one finer note.

"I am going to make the kava," she said. "You shall have the second cup to-night."

"Who will have the third?" I asked; for the third is the cup of honor.

"I don't know," said Maiera, smiling a dazzling smile. I understood this to mean that she would not tell. . . .

It was clear that she was to be the kava-maker; her sleeves had been rolled up to the shoulder, and fastened in place with a couple of gold brooches. Maiera had wonderful arms, like most of the island girls; and she knew — like all the island girls — how to make the most of their grace in the exquisitely graceful act of kava-making.

We sat still, and waited. In an assemblage of white people some one would have "made conversation," talked about the weather, the steamers; said things that every one knew, and listened to things that no one wanted to hear. These Hawongan kings and queens sat in silence. The soft, winking light of the cocoanut lamps shook on the folds of their satin and velvet robes; on their unmoving, shining, dark-brown eyes. I wondered, as I had often wondered before, what was the secret that these South Sea people knew; what gave them, in an unpeaceful world, their incomparable peace. . . .

Outside, in the moonlight, the tide was coming in. I heard each wave spill on the coral sand, a little higher, a little louder than the last. My heart went with the tide; it has always done so; I think it al-

ways will. Always, I shall feel the pulse of life rise with the gladness of the making tide; sink low and quiet, as the seas draw home. I am very sure that I shall die of a neap-tide night, when the waves have drawn back to the utmost verge of the reef, and pause, in darkness, and in silence, holding their breath. . . . Such hours, I think, were meant for people to die in.

But the joys of life; the moments that ring, like golden bells, through half a century of after years — these, to me, have been borne, always, on the crests of the rising tide.

The tide was coming in . . . I heard it, and I knew, as clearly as if the free, triumphant waves had spoken in words, what they were bringing to me.

There was a stir among the silent kings and queens; a rustling of their robes; a turning towards the doorway. A shadow blotted the moonlight; there was only one shadow in Hawonga so tall. A foot came over the threshold; there was only one foot in the islands so swift and so light.

"Iorana!" said the one voice in the world.

"Iorana! (hail!) Engelandi!" answered, in chorus, all the kings and queens.

Somehow, I do not know how, a gap was made beside me on the floor, and Captain England sat down in it. He carried his peaked, white-covered sailor's cap in one hand; he had on a white, gold-buttoned suit; the brilliant ribbons and the bright silver of his war medals shone upon his breast. A moment before, I would have thought it impossible that I should sit calmly thus beside him. I would have pictured myself hiding — running away — agitated, at the least, beyond possibility of concealment. But when he sat down there, it seemed, suddenly, the most natural thing in the world. And when he

said, "Good evening, Dara," I answered, "Good evening," as if we had spent the last five years meeting each other every day.

It was clear that some ceremony was intended, with which the satin and velvet dresses, and the perfumes, and the kava bowl, all had to do. Lalua began it by emptying a quarter of a pint of musk over England's immaculate suit and perfectly brushed hair. I had never seen his hair so close before. It astonished me to see how dense it was — silky and fine in fiber, but thick as an animal's fur. Lalua's scent ruffled it all up, and spotted the starch of his coat; but he endured the infliction coolly, though I saw him wrinkle his nostrils a little, as the full blast of scent struck them. Absurdly, I wanted to protect him from the scent . . . to protect Harry England, the hawk of the South Seas!

A girl is as much of a woman at seventeen as she will be at twenty-seven, although in these days of late marriages — a thing unrecognized by the natural scheme of the world — we are in danger of forgetting what our grandparents well knew. England was two and thirty, a soldier, a sea captain, a rover and adventurer, tough as teakwood, and strong as a buffalo; yet I knew, instinctively, that in some ways I could, and should, be his protector, even as he could in a thousand other ways be mine. So does one learn love, in a Love Island.

Round England's neck they threw a wreath of something that looked like scarlet feathers, and was in reality scarlet berries, split into long strips. This was as thick as a lady's boa; it had a strong scent of its own, and was in addition deluged with ylang-ylang. Then Maiera produced a crown of pomegranate flowers, close, neat, vermilion-colored, and set it on his head. He took it all quite gravely, ex-

cept when the cool, dew-wet flowers descended on his hair; then he laughed a little, and looked at me out of the corners of long, mischievous eyes. . . . I was astonishingly pleased to guess, as I did, that he felt a little ridiculous, and was trying to find out if I thought so too. It made him so much more human.

As a fact, the close, scarlet wreath made him look like a Roman gladiator, and was suitable in the last degree to his dark, masculine features — for in spite of hard jaw and jutting nose, he had looks not to be despised. Lalua cast him a glance hard to translate — liking — regret — I know not what. She turned to Maiera.

" Kava now," she said. A boy, hitherto invisible, took the great root outside, and began pounding it with two stones.

" Who's kava-maker? " asked England. Then, before Lalua could answer (we all knew, of course, that it was the unmarried Maiera's office) —" Dara, don't you know how? What about you? "

Oh, the significance of the looks that passed among the kings and queens! But never a word was said.

I rolled up my sleeves to the shoulder. England produced a couple of pins (when is a sailor found without a pin?) and deftly pinned them for me. Maiera pushed the kava bowl across to me with a vicious shove. She had already prepared her dress; and she knew well that no arm in Hawonga was a match for hers, save only the two over which I had just fastened up my sleeves. Maiera liked making kava, and showing her lovely arms in the turns and poses of the ceremony. She did not like watching another girl surpass her on her own ground.

No one, however, took any notice of her disap-

pointment. They were all occupied in watching a white girl perform the ceremony; all determined to be " down on " any slip. . . .

I made none. I took the pounded kava, poured on the water, and drew the bibiscus-fiber strainer through it again and again, flinging the strainer over my shoulder when the drink was ready. I handed the first shell-full to Lalua, calling out her name; she clapped her hands, drank, and sent the bowl spinning back teetotum fashion across the mat to me. I called out my own name, drank the second bowl, and filled the third. Then there was a pause. The third, in Hawonga, is the royal bowl; if Lalua had forgone her rights for that evening, there was surely some weighty reason for it.

" Engelandi," said a whisper somewhere.

" England," I intoned, rising and giving the bowl to my neighbor with a curtsey — for the royal bowl must be given by the kava-maker standing, bent double. The captain clapped his hands, and drank. And while the bowl was at his lips, the whole body of kings and queens burst out into a cry of " Engelandi. Te Ariki Rorona! " (England, the Chief of Rorona.)

The ceremony was explained. I had heard of Rorona; it was a far-out island, belonging to two or three different kings, and carrying with it the honor of a royal title. England had bought it, and in consequence had been formally admitted that night to the ranks of the island royalties. Some white men would have despised the distinction. Harry England did not; he knew its value, to a schooner captain and trader.

The royalties now settled back comfortably on the floor and began to look about them. Apparently the event was over.

But there was more to come.

Harry England had not, like Lalua and myself, drained the cocoanut shell, though island custom demanded it. He now held up his shell and showed that it was half full.

"Maiera!" he commanded.

Maiera, from her seat on the other side of the circle, came, somewhat unwillingly, but without delay. I think folk seldom delayed when Harry England spoke.

"Give this," he said, "to the Queen of Rorona."

Maiera, bending double, came and stood before me, and held out the bowl. And I knew that my fate in life, for all the sixty years or so that perhaps remained to me, depended on whether I took the bowl or not, for according to Hawongan custom the sharing of the kava bowl means betrothal. It was a strange way of making an offer of marriage — but Harry England did nothing like other men.

I have been shaken almost to faintness, in my life, by things of small importance — by fear of a thunderstorm, by anxiety over some small event or plan; by news suddenly received, good or bad. I have stammered before visitors in a drawing-room; have been dumb when asked if I would go riding or driving, because I could not make up my mind on the question; have said what I did not mean, meant what I did not say, because, in some small emergency of social life, my tongue and my presence of mind failed me. But that night, before the kings and queens of Hawonga, with the fate of all my after days hanging on one word, one action — with a thousand warnings ringing in my ears, and a thousand fears in ambush, ready to leap out upon me — I hesitated not an instant. I took the kava cup from Maiera's hand, and drank it to the last white

drop. I set it on the mat again, and called out, Hawonga fashion, " Engelandi ! "

And in another moment his hand was in mine, clasped as if it never would let go again.

You should have heard the kings and queens cheering — you should have seen Kaviki of the Turtle Cays jump up and slap Harry England on the back, and Merana, Queen of Aivei (she was young and large-eyed and long of hair) spring from the mats. I think to kiss the King of Rorona, in her excitement, only her fat old husband, Prince Consort Lukuo, pulled her back by the tail of her gown, and caused her to sit suddenly and violently down again. . . . And then it was for Maiera to resume her office that had been usurped, and with many bendings of beautiful wrists, and turnings outward of dimpled elbows, to serve kava to all the rest of the kings and queens. And as kava, moderately taken, makes for talkativeness, even as, immoderately drunk, it paralyzes the limbs, leaving the drinker unable to walk without assistance, the talk ran high and gay and noisy for an hour or so. And Harry England sat with my hand in his, and never let it go, until, of a sudden, as it seemed, the moon was down and the sea below the veranda showed pink as the inside of a shell, and the coral beach was gray in the coming dawn.

Then he rose, and helped me to rise, and told Lalua that she must come with us to see me home. Lalua nodded wisely.

" Good," she said.

We went out into the ivory dawn light, and through the silent, flowery lanes and roadways; and it was as if, to me, the gates of Paradise had been unlocked, and I was walking among the blooms of Eden and beside the Tree of Life.

At the gateway of our house, where the climbing fires of bougainvillæa were beginning to burn redly in the sun, Harry England paused to take my left hand in both of his, and slip off the little forget-me-not ring and the half hoop of aquamarines. I had forgotten all about them, during the storms of yesterday; they were so much a part of my hand that I never remembered whether I had them on or not.

Some way from our gate the sea ran into the land in a sudden curve, making a narrow bay, surrounded by high cliffs. At all stages of the tide, this bay was floored with water, fathomless, black-blue. The captain eyed the distance and, with a mighty shot, flung out the two rings in a whistling curve. They rose, sank, and went down below the edge of the cliff.

"Just a moment. Stand still!" he said, and his hands were busy with my earrings; first one side, then the other. I heard him draw his breath quickly, once, twice. "You'll want a blacksmith to set you free from that," he said. . . .

Lalua looked aside, as we parted.

A minute later, I was in my own room, staring at my face in the glass, and wishing I could cut out with a knife, or burn with a red-hot iron, the place on my lips where another man, before my lover, had kissed.

And the great pink pearls were fastened to my ears by the closing of the heavy gold setting, so that, as Harry England said, nothing but a blacksmith's tools could have set me free.

. . . . . .

Our wedding was arranged for the next week but one.

Lorraine, formally asked for her consent by England himself, in the course of a proper afternoon

call, had given it without much cavil. She had made an objection or two, plain-spoken enough; and she had not asked me to leave the room before she made them. England had answered all she said, gravely and calmly. It was true, he allowed, that the *Queen of the Islands* had been partly run by handsome young native girls, some years before. It was not true now; it would not be again. It was true that he had killed more than one man — in fair fight. He could not, he said, see the difference between that and the things they had given him bits of ribbon for, over on the other side of the world. A fight was a fight; and that was all there was to it. It was not altogether true that he had broken and oppressed one trader after another who incurred his ill will, or got in the way of his business. He had certainly not run his affairs on philanthropic principles; he did not know any one who did. The under dog always yelped; it was his privilege to do so.

As regarded his own prospects, they were very fair. He had just bought Rorona, a fine island out beyond the group, halfway to Tahiti, and he proposed living there; had had part of it for some years; it was a nice property. Yes, he knew I owned half of Hiliwa Dara; he thought the best thing I could do was to sell out to Luke. . . . Yes, Luke had an extraordinary objection to him, but he did not know that he was called on to consider that. He had heard about Luke's letter. Was there anything else Miss Hamilton wished to ask?

Miss Hamilton had nothing else to ask. She said, gracefully, but clearly enough, that she did not altogether approve of the marriage. However, she did not suppose much good would be done by refusing the consent that she, as legal guardian, had to give.

" Not much," was England's quiet comment. In that one polite sentence, I think, she had asked him if he meant to carry me off, should she refuse her consent; in his brief reply, he had informed her that he certainly would. They were worthy of one another, those two. I have sometimes wondered why they never fell in love. It would have been a mating of two tigers. . . .

But if Lorraine had nothing to say — or nothing that she would say — against the match, there was another person who would, under ordinary circumstances, have had a great deal to say. I have often wondered just how events would have turned out, if Dinah had not fallen ill.

She did, suddenly and rather seriously. She had been ailing for a day or two, and on the evening of the kava-drinking at the Queen's, she had taken a bad turn. The doctor did not think her illness dangerous, but it puzzled him a little. She was very low, rather feverish, and inclined to be delirious, wandering every now and then and coming back to her senses only for a little time, before drifting off again into dreams and fancies. Lorraine ordered a nurse from the hospital to come down and attend to her; she, herself, was too practical and modern to think that unskilled nursing, however well meant, could be equal to the trained services of a competent professional.

The professional nursed Dinah for a day or two, and then asked to be allowed to remove her to the pretty cottage hospital on the hill overlooking the town.

" She'd be far better there," explained Nurse Elsie, standing up straight and slim in her spotless blue uniform and white apron. " One doesn't know how these obscure troubles may turn out."

"Do you mean that it's contagious?" asked Lorraine.

"I don't mean anything, Miss Hamilton, because I don't know anything. But on general principles, when the patient keeps so persistently low and delirious, with quite a moderate temperature, it's as well to have her under closer observation than one can get in a private house."

Maiera, who had called to inquire after Dinah, nodded her approval.

"There are all sorts of queer things, that the doctors don't understand, in these islands," she said. "I'm sure she will be better where they can observe her all the time. Let us tell her; she will be so glad."

"Here, stop!" cried the nurse, as Maiera flitted, with that light dancing step of hers, out of the drawing-room and down the veranda that led to Dinah's room.

Maiera did not seem to hear; she went fast; her pink satin nightdress robe floated out behind her, yet she did not seem to be hurrying. . . .

The nurse followed her, on high tapping heels that pattered like little hoofs. I was sitting on a long chair just between the two rooms, the doors of both were open, and I could see in.

Maiera reached Dinah's bed before Nurse Elsie was halfway down the veranda. She flung herself on her knees beside it.

"Oh, Dinah, my very dear," she said in her cooing voice, "I am so glad; they are going to take you out of this hot house, up on the top of the hill to the lovely hospital, where you will have such good care. Presently they will come for you and take you away. Oh, I am so glad for you."

That morning, the low delirium had almost

cleared away; Dinah knew what was said to her, and understood most of it. The effect of Maiera's announcement was dynamitic. Dinah, though accepted by all the Hiliwa Dara family as practically an equal, had nevertheless been born and bred in the domestic-servant class, and she retained all its prejudices. To the servant, the word "hospital" is one of unspeakable horror. While the titled employer, when sick, is ready at once to exchange a luxurious home and perfect service for the austere private ward and its tyrannical nurse, her kitchen maid, in like case, shudders and weeps at the bare thought of hospital care; begs to be spared it; would gladly exchange, for half a bed in a grimy cottage and the rough help of ignorant neighbors, all the safeties, helps, and resources of modern science. . . .

But Maiera — could Maiera — have known this? I cannot say. I can only say what happened. Dinah burst into tears, sat up in her bed, and declared her intention of running away.

"Gi' me my bonnet and shawl," she said, harking back, in her confused speech, to old days of youth and London — for, in the burning islands, such words as "bonnet" and "shawl" are not in any one's vocabulary. "Gi' them me, till I get up and run where I can hide; I'll have no hussies with towels on their heads takin' me to where them doctors can poison me and cut me up after I'm dead."

"Oh, hush, hush," soothed Maiera, making, on her knees, in her graceful, brilliant dress, a picture of surpassing loveliness (and well, I think, she knew it). "Dear Dinah, no one will do anything you don't like. Nobody will cut you up. The doctors only want to make you well. And the hospital is such a nice place —"

Dinah made a leap right out of bed, and began fumbling, with hands that shook pitifully, for her clothes. Nurse Elsie, who had been trying, ineffectually, to interrupt Maiera's speech, now took action.

"Here, don't mind her," she said, in the clear, deliberate tone used so effectively by the practiced nurse. "You're not going anywhere. Get back into bed and have your beef tea. You're going to stay here, in this house. Come on, get back."

"Am I going to stay? Am I?" begged Dinah, leaning on Nurse Elsie's arm, and climbing, painfully, into her deserted bed. "I'm not ill, you know, nurse; it's only a bit of infusion; insectual infusion, the doctor called it; I heard him. I always was easy infused. Let me lay quiet, and I'll be all right to-morrow; or if I'm not"— her eyes brightened with a touch of the old interest in things funereal —"you'll find my very best nightdress, never worn, in the second drawer from the top."

"Pooh, nonsense!" declared the nurse, throwing the sheet lightly over her patient, and tucking in the mosquito net. "You'll want your boots to go out for a walk, more likely. . . . Now there," she said, moving away from the bed, "that's done it; you won't get her to hospital if you prayed her on your bended knees. Whatever did possess you to talk like that?"

"Oh, I am sorry," grieved Maiera cooingly. We were all out on the veranda again. "I was so anxious to get her to go. I meant it all for the best."

"Hum!" commented Nurse Elsie. "In my experience, nine-tenths of the mischief that's done in the world goes under that label. I hope when I

die, that they'll put on my tombstone —' She never meant anything for the best.' "

" I have brought some more of those good limes of Lalua's for her," said Maiera, meekly accepting the reproof. " There is nothing like them; but I am very sorry there are so few; I could only get three this morning."

" Thanks, she fancies them, and they take down the fever a little," said the nurse.

" Let me cool them, like before," asked Maiera. " It is such a pity there is no ice. . . . See, you must use a very, very sharp knife like mine " (she pulled a razor-edged sheath knife from her dress) " and you must cut the lime in two with a quick sweep, so that the oil shall not come out too much from the skin; it is too harsh, that oil, it burns the lip. Then, like this, you put it in the wind, but no sun, for ten minute, and it is cold." She set the plate of limes on the flat-topped rail of the veranda. They were certainly magnificent fruits; round, smooth-skinned, and as large as tennis balls. Maiera shifted the cut halves so that the wind should blow over them. " Give her to drink," she said, and floated away down the steps out through the garden.

" She's wonderfully pretty, isn't she? " commented Nurse Elsie generously.

" Yes," I agreed. " Do you like her? "

" Do you? " countered the nurse.

" I don't know," I said. And, indeed, I thought I did not know.

. . . . . .

Looking back upon that week, across the seas and across the years, it seems to me the most actual, vivid part of my life. I can hardly realize that at the time it all seemed to me like a dream. Yet this was so. I know that I went through the business

of every day, the sewing and preparing of my clothes, the turn of nursing in Dinah's room (for she kept still on the same level, neither better nor worse), the twelve o'clock rest for my complexion, the five o'clock walk for my health, as if I were only half awake. Every morning when I awoke in my little, still room overlooking the wide seas, I said to myself — "I am going to marry Harry England in five days from to-day, counting to-day — in four days — in three. . . ." Every night when I tucked my mosquito net in all round and laid my head on the pillow I said to myself, "One more day gone; four days now — three — two. . . ." And I always added to myself, "I do not believe it."

Yet, as I say, looking back and knowing — now — whither those five, four, three, two days were leading me, they seem clean cut upon the plain of memory as, on an Ukraine steppe, the tall black posts that mark what was once a track through snow.

Harry England was away. He had called once, after his formal call on Lorraine, to tell me that important business took him from Hawonga, but that he would be back the day before that fixed for the wedding.

He stayed a little while for a chat. I was more and more astonished by the difference between his behavior to me and that of Luke. Luke, in the little time that had been ours together, had seemed especially anxious to mark his proprietorship of me. I was not to dance with this one. I was to do that, and was not to do the other. I was to remember so-and-so. I was to come out and wander alone with him in the garden, under the moonlight; I was to sit beside him on the bench, with his arm about me, when he chose, and to go in and dance again when he thought that dancing would be pleasant.

He was like his letters — so I thought — kind, generous, but, oh, so determined on that point of proprietorship, on the holding of the foolish little bond that had been forged by our elders long ago! Concerning that extraordinary flash of another spirit that had blazed up and burned the bond to a cinder, I did not think when engaged thus comparing my two lovers. I may have felt that it was so far alien to Luke's own real character as not to come into the question.

Harry England, on the afternoon when he came to say good-by, was tactfully left with me by Lorraine. We were on the little side veranda, I remember; the small sheltered one, overhung with glorious chains of passion fruit and flowers, and overlooking at no great distance the cliff edge and the golden line of the sleeping, wide Pacific. He handed me a comfortable chair and took for himself the only straight one on the veranda, in which he sat upright, as he always did, one foot a little back, one hand leaning on his knee, the other dropped at his side. It is a graceful attitude, but I do not think he knew it to be so, except as he knew, in general, his own physical perfection. He sat thus, looking at me, oftener and longer than I could have wished, talking scarcely at all, and not moving during the first half hour of his stay from the position he had taken up. In homely phrase, his immobility "got on my nerves" at last; I had never seen any human being keep so still. His dark, long eyes, full of things uncomprehended, incomprehensible, seemed the only live things about him. They, indeed, were as alive as two electric dynamos in full play. . . . I grew tired of making conversation; of telling him that I had been to call on the Garstangs, that Mabelle had a cold; that everybody had been very nice about our

engagement (which was true — I don't think most people had had time to realize the original one before they heard it did not actually exist, and that the happy man was quite another than Luke). . . .

I grew tired, as I say, and suddenly broke out with:

"What are you thinking of? Why are you so still?"

"Do you want me to be lively?" asked England, with the ghost of a smile about his lips, and those dynamos in his eyes beginning to sparkle more than ever.

"I don't think I do," I said.

"Why do you not?"

"Because," I answered him consideringly, "you seem to me like something that is still till it goes off with a bang."

He laughed at this — laughed heartily, with his hands suddenly put up before his face — a boyish gesture that sat well on him, despite his thirty years.

"You're not a bad judge of character, after all," he said. "But I'm not loaded — or, if I am, the safety catch is down; you can throw me about any way that you like."

Pacific folk know firearms. The simile was clear to me; I liked it. I felt a sudden confidence, a flashing realization of what it would mean through life to have this tamed fierceness, this reined-in strength, linked to my own emotion-swept slight soul. For that there was small stability in me I knew right well. Luke would have "taken care" of me. This man would stand like a tower between me and the very necessity of taking care.

Most men, and many — too many — women, I knew, feared Harry England. It has come to me since then that I am perhaps the only human being

who never did. But from that moment I would not have feared him had he stood with a knife at my throat. I had seen something in his soul that — I say it after all that has passed, after all that the world has justly, hardly said — was noble and to be trusted.

"This won't do," said the captain, rising to his feet. "Four in the afternoon, and a fair wind rising. . . ." For, sailor-like, he had never lost sight of sky and sea while we sat together. "And the *Queen* not under way. It must be the fault of this other little Queen. What shall we do to her?" He stood before me, looking at me, his hands down at his sides. Luke (I could not escape the comparison) would have had his hands, and his arms, elsewhere. "We'll punish her by saying good-by. Good-by, my girl — the last of our good-bys!"

He kissed me once, and went. I stood where he left me. I did not know when he had gone. I had been swept up into Paradise, and the light had seared my eyes.

"Come down," said Lorraine's voice beside me. "I want you to help me with Dinah's tea; the nurse is gone for her walk."

I started.

"I didn't know you were there," I stammered.

"I wasn't, but I am now," replied Lorraine. She looked at me, not with sympathy. I could not help feeling, in those days, that although she was doing all in her power to help me, it was not through love.

"I wonder," I said, following her out to the storeroom, "if we aren't dreadfully heartless having this wedding with Dinah so ill."

"The doctor says it isn't dangerous," replied Lorraine, opening presses and china cupboards, and

searching for the cup she wanted — a large one, that Dinah liked. "He is only afraid —"

"What?"

"That's the cup now; I can't think why the nurse will always . . . Oh, he says that perhaps the mind is affected, and she may not get it back. He is a good deal puzzled; the illness is so slight and the delirium so persistent."

"Dinah — not get her mind — Oh, nonsense, you must have misunderstood him!" I cried in dismay.

"I don't misunderstand people as a rule. Will you light the Primus, please? . . . Well, if she doesn't, what are you going to do about it? — Put off the wedding?"

"Oh, no, Lorraine!" I cried. "That would be so unlucky."

"It might," she said. "Have you ever thought of how Luke will take it?"

"He hasn't any right to an opinion," I answered, head in air. "He threw that away when he wrote to me as he did."

"You're quite satisfied about that?" asked Lorraine. She was busy again in the china cupboard; she spoke over her shoulder.

"Of course I am; why not?"

"Yes, why not?" she repeated, after the slightest interval. Then, turning round, "If you will see to the kettle I'll go and look if the nurse isn't in yet; she ought to be with Dinah."

I filled the kettle, and put it cautiously on the roaring Primus, of which I was always more or less afraid. I stood watching it idly for a minute or two. A hurried step sounded from Dinah's room.

"She's gone," said Lorraine's voice, with more perturbation in it than was usual to her.

I turned round. My aunt was hastily pinning on a hat and snatching up a sunshade.

"Stay here in case she returns," she commanded.

"Who? What is it?" I cried.

"Dinah's got up and gone out. Her clothes have disappeared. Now, don't get into one of your fusses, Dara. She can't have gone far, and no one in the town would allow her to fall into any danger. I expect to bring her back before Nurse Elsie returns. She should have been in from her walk; if she had been it couldn't have happened."

Lorraine went out, in no tearing hurry, but quietly, quickly. I knew she would find Dinah if Dinah was to be found; I knew, too, that what she said about the absence of danger was true. But, nevertheless, my heart misgave me strangely, and it was not altogether eased when a rickshaw, drawn by a native, rattled up to the front veranda, carrying two passengers. Nurse Elsie, who had just returned, flew down the steps full of apologies.

"Take her other arm; she is tired out," said Lorraine. "She hadn't gone far; only to the post office. I found her on the steps, sitting down in a faint. She's all right now; aren't you, Dinah?"

"Yes, Miss Lorraine," answered our old servant collectedly. "I've been sick, I know, but I feel that much better to-night I couldn't tell you."

"Whatever made you get up and go out?" demanded Nurse Elsie.

Dinah looked at her, but made no open reply. Something she did say, in a too-audible aside, about hussies who wore towels on their heads and tried to "ordain their betters," but it was scarcely to the point. They got her to bed, gave her a stimulant and a cooling drink, and kept the room as quiet as possible; but before nightfall the delirium had come

on worse than ever, and we had to take watch and watch at her side, to prevent her getting out again.

Her ravings were mostly of her old home days, reminiscences of a Dickensian London forgotten long ago; but once or twice they made excursion into present time. She told me that I was dancing too much and would get tired. She said once, after a long silence, "I done it!" triumphantly; and then, the doctor's quieting medicine beginning to take effect, she let her head drop on the pillow and closed her eyes.

"That'll do," said the physician, who had been hurriedly sent for. "I'll go now; she'll be quiet — but no more of these excursions."

"I done it," insisted Dinah, opening her eyes again.

"Yes, yes, of course you did," soothed Nurse Elsie. She herded Lorraine and myself out of the room, and lowered the light.

. . . . . .

The wedding was fixed for a Saturday. It was to be in the church, but entirely private. Seven in the morning was the hour chosen; Harry England had told me that that would suit his plans for the schooner best. We were going away on her; he had not told me where. "It's to be a surprise for you," was all he would say. Of course I guessed what the surprise was going to be. It had been the desire of my life to visit Tahiti — to see a French colony, with a gay little Frenchified town, to drive round the island behind one of the Tahiti teams, see the tomb of King Pomaré, visit Pierre Loti's pool, and — last, but certainly not least — to shop in stores that were kept by real French people, and would, in consequence, have the most charming things in them. . . .

Harry knew this. It followed, of course, that the bow of the *Queen* would be pointed for Tahiti when we sailed. But I humored him by pretending not to guess what he had in store. I packed all my smartest clothes in two great boxes; I included every pair of shoes I had, and they were many. Frenchwomen were so particular about their shoes. . . . Well, most of them, I was comfortably certain, did not wear a " narrow two."

And so the days before the wedding went by.

During that week the weather broke. The year was well advanced, and the heat, in consequence, almost at its worst; but we had not yet had the great gales that can only blow from the northwest in the latter months, rising in some ill-omened years to hurricane force. They were, however, overdue, and Wednesday and Thursday saw their commencement. By Friday, the day before that set for the wedding, the seas were running mountains high outside the reef, and the lagoon within was a mass of beaten foam. The palm trees, striving with the wind, leaned eastward in long curves; their streaming tressy leaves, their piteous slim white bodies giving them, as ever, the look of women attacked and distressed, that is so characteristic of palm trees in a gale.

How many wives and sweethearts — oh, how many! — in that ocean world of the islands, where the wild sea is the only road, have watched, as I watched, the streaming tresses of the palms in a blackened sky; have tried to believe that, as hour after hour wore on, the torment of the beaten leaves grew less, the long, flower-like stems give way to the wind no more! How many, with a sickening heart, have seen instead the palm heads bend and bend, the trunks twist more desperately with every

rising assault; have heard with agony the sharp crack that tells the victory of the storm, and seen some mighty head go down the gale, carrying in its wild flight the last of hope!

It is the palms that tell — eighty feet up in air, with leaves like giant feathers, they are the first to feel and show increase in the wind; the first to announce by their quick relief any slackening of its force. When the heads of the palms, with all their panoply of leaves and store of weighty nuts, begin to go, then men say that it is no longer a gale, but the dreaded hurricane; then women, watching the sea as only island women watch, lose heart and hope no more for the return of the feeble, battling sail that carries all they love. . . .

That Friday I was nearly mad. I knew that the Pacific had never yet brewed the weather that would hold back Harry England from taking out his ship. I knew that to-day, of all days, he would assuredly be battling with the gale, which was more than a gale — I dared not give it its true name — among the horrible reefs that surrounded the Hawonga group. I knew, with the painful knowledge of the island girl, that the wind was in the wrong quarter for his approach, and that he must beat up, inch by inch, almost dead against the storm — he had sailed out somewhere to the eastward with a strong fair wind, I had to know this, and to watch, and look, and wait. . . .

Lorraine was kind enough. She thought my fear plain folly, but she did not say so outright. She went about her business in the house, calmly housekeeping, calmly packing, with the help of a native girl, the last of the trunks that I was to take away in the morning. She gave orders as usual for the turning out of the spare bedroom, which was always

scrubbed on a Friday, even though the girl declared with tears that there was no use scrubbing out a room when the house would probably be unroofed before nighttime. The fearful noise of the storm did not seem to affect her in the least. We had deserted the verandas as untenable on such a day, and were living in the inner rooms; a thing that, in the tropic world, one only does during gales. From time to time as she passed up and down my aunt would pause, look out at the sea, and then return to her work without comment.

"Is it better?" I would cry to her from my place on the bed, where I was hiding my head among pillows, and trying not to see the awful waves.

"You can hear for yourself. Why do you behave so foolishly? Don't you think Harry England knows how to manage a ship?"

"Yes, but any captain should run for shelter with such a wind — and he won't."

"What are you going to do after the wedding, supposing the gale keeps on, if you are so scared?"

"Do?" I said, sitting up on my bed, and shaking back the cloak of my fallen hair; "sail with him."

"If it keeps on like this?"

"If it was twenty times worse — if it was the Day of Judgment breaking up the world — I'd sail — with him."

"You are a curious mixture," said my aunt, looking at me with eyes not disapproving.

"What would you do yourself, Lorraine?"

"I?" Lorraine stood up, very straight and slim, with her long hands clasped before her on the black and green dress that had so little now of mourning in it. "I'd go to the man I loved through burning fire. I'd walk along a road of naked swords. And

I wouldn't, before or after, howl. If the man deserved love he would deserve courage, too. Courage for him as well as for myself. There's where your love fails, my little Dara. It's easy for a woman to be brave for herself — harder when she has to be brave for him. A woman should venture everything for the man she loves — so long as honor's kept what matters what the world says?"

"I don't understand you," I said, lying down again and putting my hands over my aching head. The wind grew up fiercer than ever; the iron roof of the bungalow resounded like a drum.

"It will to go, it will to go!" sobbed the native girl at the door.

"It won't go!" said Lorraine. "I have been looking at the barometer, and that's on the turn. Go on with your work. Dara, if you don't want to look like a perfect fright to-morrow, you had better take hold of yourself a bit. England won't be drowned this time. I daresay he will some day — there's truth in the saying about the pitcher and the well — but the day's not yet."

I hardly heard the last of her sentence, I was so eager to verify what she had said about the glass. I sprang from my bed and flew to the place in the hall where the great aneroid barometer was hung.

The movable brass had announced a rise.

"Thank God!" I said, clinging to the barometer as an Italian to his saint.

"And now, I suppose," said Lorraine, "we shall have some peace."

The gale — hurricane — whatever it may have been called — it was half of one and half of the other, I think — went down much more quickly than it had risen. By sunset the palm-tree tops were almost still, shaking only a little from side to side

now and then, as if they could not quite forget what they had suffered, and were still agitated over the memory of it. The night came, clear and full of stars. At the foot of the cliffs the sea, unappeased, thundered in the darkness.

" He will come to-night," I said.

When dinner was cleared away I sat on the veranda and watched. It was too dark to see a sail, if there was one, beat up across the open bay, but I knew that I should have some sign, even as I knew that the *Queen of the Islands* would not fail to come.

Dinah was settled down by her nurse for the night; I went in to see her, and to kiss her, before she fell asleep. She seemed unusually well that evening; I longed to tell her what was to happen on the morrow, but Nurse Elsie was on the watch and never left us alone.

" Now that she's on the mend," she warned me as I went out, " don't you go setting her back. She may seem better, but she's in no state to hear any agitating news."

" Haven't you any idea what the illness is? " I asked.

" Oh, I leave that to the doctor," was her strictly professional reply. " But I can say this much, you'll have her about again in no time. She has taken a good deal of nourishment to-day, and that's new. She'd a fancy for fruit — invalids always do crave for acids — but I couldn't get her any on account of the storm. I wouldn't give her passion fruit off the veranda, it's so sweet and seedy, and there was nothing else."

" Have you none of Lalua's limes? " I asked.

Nurse Elsie brisked up into indignation.

" I should think not," she said, " when that useless

house girl of yours has taken the lot for herself. I told Miss Hamilton, and she'd have given her what-for with the chill off, only the girl had gone home as soon as the wind went down."

"Never mind, we'll have some to-morrow as soon as Dinah's awake," I said. "She has simply got to be better, on my wedding day."

The nurse twisted her chatelaine round and round.

"They say," she ventured, "that Captain England is — is — Well, I suppose you're not marrying him without knowing that he's Lucifer himself."

"Good night," I pronounced, with dignity. I went off to my room, so much angered by the last few words of the nurse that those which had gone before made no impression at all.

You will ask — how could we have been so stupid, so unseeing? And I can only reply that it is easy to be wise after the event. You must remember that you have by this time guessed things not known to us until later — until too late. . . .

The evening was advanced now, and the house had quieted down. But I did not undress. I sat on the veranda outside my room with my head leaning on the rail, and looked out at the stars and down to the unappeased, dark sea, and waited.

Ten o'clock came — eleven — and then the faintest blur of white on the face of the black plain, moving — flying — to the harbor and the town, and to me. There came a call across the waters; a call thin with distance as a bat's voice in the forest. No man but one could have sent such a signal across such a space of sea. . . .

I waited. Half-past eleven struck. The town was dark; the house had settled down to silence long ago. Only a night bird, among the tiéré flowers in

the garden, sang a little curious song, repeated over and over.

Then I heard, a long way down the road, the light pit, pit of running feet. It was not twenty seconds before they sounded near — beside me. And in the faint light of my candle lantern set on the veranda floor, I saw standing below with tumbled hair and sea-stained garments, Harry England.

The vision of him struck me like a blow — I thought at first he was a ghost — his own wandering spirit come to tell me of his death, so white and strange he looked, so wet were his clothes. I knew afterwards that he had been on the deck of the *Queen* fighting the storm for two whole days and nights without rest, when he ran up the road to my house in the dark of that night before our wedding morning.

I don't know what I expected him to say, but as usual it was something that no one could have anticipated.

The veranda was low and he was tall. He reached up till he could put his cold, wet hand on mine, as it lay on the railing.

"Girl!" he said, "are you sure as death you want to go on with it?"

If Luke — or any other man — had asked me such a question I should have been offended — hurt, frightened — I do not know what. I should have fancied that he wanted to draw back. Anyhow, I should have misunderstood in some way.

But it was Harry England, and I understood.

"I am sure as death," I answered him in his own words.

"I've run you in for it," he said, still in that strange, excited voice, his eyes shining black in his

white face. "I've played on you. You hadn't a chance. . . ."

"I don't wish for one," I said. "I want you."

"You know what I am," he went on, speaking quickly.

I understand now that the intense fatigues and anxieties of the past few days had shaken even his iron nerve and beaten down, in consequence, the guard he commonly kept over his speech.

"I can't promise to alter — much. I'm something of a wrong 'un. I must have what I want — must go where I please — and things stand between, and I break them. I'll always do it. I'd give my life to make you happy, but I shan't. You had best know it, girl."

Words have never come easily to me in the great crises of life; I could find but one thing to say:

"I don't want to be happy. I want you."

He stood there, struggling for a moment with the impulse to say something or not to say it — I could not tell which, but I could tell it was a matter of import. Then he turned away, still looking up at me.

"You'll have what you want," he said. "And, by God, so will I."

It was an oath, strongly spoken — too strongly for the occasion, for what was there in truth to hold him from his wish and mine?

He never said good night. I heard him running down the road again — pit-pit, pit-pit — and then he was gone, and the small bird in the tiéré flowers took up its tiny song, curious, sad, over and over again.

. . . . . .

CHAPTER XI

THERE was never a quieter wedding morning. The clouds to one who knew their signs promised wind before midday, but at seven o'clock, when Lorraine and I walked down together to the little white church among the poinsettias and the palms, there was not a breath astir. The air was still pleasantly cool, though the sun, from the sea's broad blazing shield, began to strike fiercely upwards in our faces. Out beyond the reef waves were grumbling; within it the lagoon lay still and vividly, marvelously green.

Under my lace and linen parasol I walked slowly, not to become overheated before we should reach the church. As the wedding was to be so quiet, I wore neither wreath nor veil. Lorraine, with her unerring taste, had selected for me a delicate white dress, silk-embroidered by the hands of patient Chinese, and a hat of the sailor shape that was then in fashion, trimmed with bunches of white violets. She herself, for the first time in my recollection of her, had put off all traces of the mourning she had worn so long, and now went clad in pale lemon color and lace. It suited her amazingly.

For all my vanity of a pretty girl I realized as we walked under the poinsettias together that the woman beside me was my equal, if not more than my equal, in looks.

Of course, I thought, in my secret soul, that it was rather foolish of Lorraine to insist on being pretty at the frightful age of five and thirty. But since

she would do it, it was as well, I thought — being my aunt and guardian — that she should do the thing properly. Lorraine was certainly a relation for any bride to be proud of.

I had thought I should be nervous. I was not; there never went to the church a calmer bride than I. I was marrying the only man in the world; I was doing the only thing I could have done. It was as natural as the sunrise or the stars. . . .

"Lorraine?" I asked her, as we neared the church, "how did you feel on your wedding morning? Do you know, you never told me all about it. How old were you, Lorraine?"

"I was just your age," she said, but the other half of the question she left unanswered. We were almost at the porch, and I did not speak to her again, for it seemed to me that she did not care on that day to look back.

"If some one," I thought, with a cold shiver, "were to come and tell me, as they told her, that *he* was dead . . . I should never go on living as Lorraine did. I think I should just fall down where they told me, and my heart would break, and I should die."

Somehow I had said the last three words aloud. Lorraine stopped in the dust of the roadway, so that I, perforce, had to stop, too.

"You would," she said emphatically, "or break your heart, or go mad. You are not the kind to stand up against the loss of the biggest thing in the world. Any one who saves you from that is your friend."

"Lorraine," I said helplessly, "I can't understand you; but if we don't go on they will be waiting."

She laughed, a curious little laugh. "No, you

don't understand, but don't forget it all the same," she said. And we went into the church.

There was a clergyman I know, and I know, too, that early as it was a few curious folk from the surrounding villas had come in to look on at the wedding, and were scattered about the pews. But I did not see them. I do not remember even seeing the Rector, with his surplice and his book. I saw one figure only, that of Harry England.

He was standing in the chancel, close to the rails, looking down the church. He was very tall in his white, gold-buttoned suit; the light from two colored windows fell in crossing streams upon him, and patched his coat with rays of blue and " patines of bright gold." His eyes met me as I entered, and held fast to mine. And I went up the aisle, beside Lorraine, unconscious that I was walking, unconscious that Dara Hamilton was Dara Hamilton, only knowing that those eyes were holding my eyes and drawing me to him. How shall I tell the rest?

Lorraine had fallen into the background. I had taken my place by Harry England; the Rector had opened his book, and I was coming back to myself, and remembering that I must now hear and speak for the second time, in earnest and with all my heart, the words that I had spoken carelessly and without understanding as a child. I hated the thought of that previous speaking and hearing as I had hated the thought of Luke's past kisses on the lips that were Harry England's now.

" Dearly beloved . . ."

Did the Rector actually speak, or did I anticipate the words that I knew? I cannot say. I have never been quite clear concerning what happened in that moment, except as to one thing.

There was a disturbance in the church behind me.

Some one had come in in a hurry; some one was walking very fast — running, almost — up the aisle. The Rector stopped — if he had begun; I am not sure of that — and looked over his book. I heard the rustle of Lorraine's crisp dress, as if she had suddenly turned. I don't know what the thought in my mind was — something vague about the schooner, I think, and a possible accident to her, and people wanting her captain. . . . I looked up at Harry's face. It was perfectly immobile; he had not glanced round.

Then the thunderbolt fell.

"Stop this marriage!"

It was Luke's voice. I turned, so bewildered that I had not even strength to be angry, or to fear — yet — and I saw Luke Ivory, white, breathless, standing at the foot of the chancel steps.

The Rector, holding his book still open, faced him and asked:

"What do you mean? This is a very serious thing to do. What right have you to interfere?" He knew, as many in Hawonga did, that Luke and I had been not long before an engaged couple. I suppose he thought that the interruption was a jealous lover's revenge.

Luke, still somewhat out of breath, replied, with short pauses between his words:

"I've every right. This lady is — married — to me."

The Rector shut his book; he seemed to think that matters were getting serious.

"Come into the vestry," he said sharply. People in the church were beginning to stand up and talk.

We went into the vestry — the Rector, Lorraine, myself, Harry England, and Luke. I was holding tight to Harry England's hand. It terrified me to

feel that his own clasp was slack. His face terrified me, too. It had the dead, inhuman look I had seen on it once before — on that night when only the cunning of Lalua had saved Luke Ivory's life.

"Now," said the Rector, "will you please explain what you have said? You claim to be married to Miss Dara Hamilton. What are your proofs? What has she to say herself?"

"Dara can't deny," said Luke, "that she and I were married at Hiliwa Dara Island by my great-grandfather, who was an ordained minister, licensed to perform marriages in the diocese the island is in."

"Is this true?" asked the Rector. His pinkish, whiskered face seemed half angry, half perplexed. He did not seem to know what to believe.

"We — we — there was a ceremony," I stammered.

"A marriage ceremony?"

"Yes — but —"

"Then, may I ask, what do you and Captain England mean by —"

"Leave it to me," said England, speaking for the first time. He had grown white beneath his dark sea tan; it had a curious look. But he was much the most self-possessed of any person there.

"The ceremony," he said, "was performed between two children of twelve and fifteen, nearly six years ago. They were separated immediately after, and did not meet again until they saw one another, for a few minutes, at Colonel Garstang's dance. Ivory left for Hiliwa Dara Island that night. Those are the facts."

"Hiliwa Dara — six years ago —" repeated the Rector. "At that time the whole group was under British law. The ceremony undoubtedly holds

good, if performed with parents' consent. Unusual, of course — very, but —"

"Oh!" I cried, "Mrs. Wilcox said no one could be married at that age — and Mrs.—"

"It doesn't matter how many ill-informed people said it. The business of a clergyman is to know such things; he doesn't guess. Why, may I ask, did no one apply to me if there was any doubt on the matter?"

"There never was any," put in Luke, somewhat hotly. "I have the certificate that my great-grandfather wrote out; he told me to keep it. And he said he had had it registered properly, and anything he said he had done, was done."

"We could apply to Wellington for a copy," said the clergyman. "Indeed, I have already asked to have the registers of the British occupation returned and placed under my care. Their removal was a most ill-judged proceeding, which could not have occurred anywhere except in the Pacific Islands." He spoke as if he were preaching.

For a moment there was a pause — a sickening pause. No one seemed to know what was to happen next. The sun, now well up, threw bars of streaming gold through the narrow lancet windows of the vestry upon the open pages of the marriage register, laid ready on the table. Pen and ink were beside it.

In the silence Harry England stepped forward, reached a chair, and placed it just in time behind my knees. I had not known that they were failing under me.

Then everybody, almost, began to talk at once. It was horrible.

"Lorraine, I trusted you; in Heaven's name what have you been about?"

"I cannot imagine," from the Rector, "why a holy ceremony should have been made into such a —"

"Why, Luke, have you forgotten your letter to her? If that didn't release me of my trust, as you call it, what —"

"Letter? What was there in it?"

"Your letter," I cried, speaking at last. "Your letter in which you said I hadn't turned out as you expected, and didn't care for you, and you gave me up, and thought the engagement had better not be —"

"Engagement? If any letter of mine ever used such a word I'll eat it. There was no engagement between us. Didn't you hear me call you my wife?"

"I thought it only meant — Oh, Luke, you wrote and said there was nothing. You said you gave me up and left me free."

Luke had turned very pale.

"Before God," he said, "I never wrote any such letter."

There was a dead silence.

"Who did write it?" asked Luke.

"I saw it," said Lorraine. "It's in the house. It's in your handwriting, and —"

"Then some one," said Luke, "has committed forgery."

I screamed out loud.

"Oh, dear me, dear me," protested the Rector, "that's a very serious charge."

"Some one," repeated Luke, "has committed forgery. Some one's tried to commit bigamy, as well. And it's impossible that — Lorraine, you can't look me in the face and say you, at least, didn't know the marriage was legal. Lorraine — Lorraine!"

There was an extraordinary note of reproach in his tone — reproach and something more. . . .

Lorraine threw up her hands and covered her face.

"I can deal with you," said Luke, facing Harry England, who all this time had neither moved nor spoken. "You're a forger and a bigamist, and a coward, and I'd rather die than let Dara touch your little finger again. Is that enough?"

"Yes," said England, and the blank black eyes broke into flame.

It was Lorraine who cried out now — Lorraine and the Rector. . . . I remember a whirling confusion in the great stone-vaulted vestry; a chorus of "Luke! Luke!" "England! for God's sake remember where you are — O Lord, they'll kill — Gentlemen — oh, disgraceful —" and another cry of "Luke!" from Lorraine. Then a trampling of feet from the front of the church, as the people who had been waiting, avid with curiosity, in the nave, broke all bounds and rushed to the vestry door. And then . . . no one looking — a current of fresh air on my face — the outer door — the steps — the white road under my shoe soles, flying, flying . . .

I did not think; I did not cry. I was conscious of one feeling only; one desire. The cliff! The end!

And as my mother had gone when love went out and left the world all dark, so, through the darkness of that daytime, went I; so, running, pushing, stumbling past the house and past the garden, and with one leap, over the cliff.

. . . . . .

There seemed to be no interval at all between the feeling of a rush of air streaming up in my face, faster and faster, and a slow painful waking up in

the dark, with something hard beneath me, and the sound of water lapping and splashing very near.

I had no intervening period of half consciousness. I found myself almost at once and knew where I was. I was lying on the cane platform of a large native canoe, and the canoe was under sail and drawing rapidly through the water before a strong favoring breeze. And it was night, and the stars were in the sky.

I say I knew where I was, but I did not for the moment remember what had happened. I lay on my hard bed, and puzzled myself to find out how I had come there. Two natives were in the narrow body of the canoe, seated upright on the little bamboo bars that crossed from side to side. They were both men, and they were talking in one of the island dialects. I did not understand what they said.

"What is it? Where am I?" I asked in English, lifting myself on my elbow and becoming conscious that I was strangely stiff and sore, as if I had had a fall.

One of the men turned his head and spoke to me, but he did not use my language. His tone was that of a man who makes an explanation. The other man began to talk in his turn. I gathered, somehow, that they were afraid of me. They had placed me as far away from themselves as the limits of the canoe permitted, and when I moved as if to come nearer they gave a simultaneous shout and started back. Then they seized their paddles and began to work hard, helping on the canoe in the direction whither the breeze was already carrying her. She went through the water like a launch, and not the slowest of launches, either. With a fair

wind and not too high a sea the island canoes can make surprisingly quick going.

I sat up, cross-legged, as one must sit on a canoe platform, and looked about me. My hair was all down and streaming in my face. I could not find any hairpins, so I plaited it, and threw it back in one large rope over my shoulder. There was something wrong with my forehead; it seemed to have had a blow, and was sore to touch, and swelled, and one of my fingers — the left little one — was sprained so that I could not use it. These things puzzled me a little, but only a little. There was a certain confusion in my head that seemed to prevent my thinking clearly. I was clear about one thing only — the fact that I was hungry.

"Have you any kai-kai?" I asked.

"Kai-kai" (food) is a word comprehended by almost every island native, whatever his tongue. One of the men nodded and reached down into the bottom of the canoe. He brought up a handful of bananas and a lump of cold yam. I took them eagerly and ate. The men watched me with interest and seemed to argue about something. . . .

"Niu?" I asked them, using the word for cocoanut that is common to most island languages. They gave me one and I drank. Again they watched me and disputed. I caught the word for "spirits," and guessed that for some reason or other they took me to be a supernatural being, and were arguing about the capacity of spirits for eating.

By and by one of the men seized the other by the arm and pointed ahead, swinging the mat sail a little to one side, so as to change the course of the canoe. I looked into the darkness and saw at the distance of a mile or two a black shape blotting the stars.

The canoe went fast through the water. By and by I could hear the humming of a distant reef and see its long white outline cut across the dark table of sea. The natives lowered their sail altogether and, turning the prow of the canoe, began to paddle towards the reef.

"Where are you going? What's the matter?" I asked them. I was still feeling confused and shaken, but it began to grow upon me that something, somewhere, had happened. And now I became conscious that I was uncomfortably, stiffly wet, as if I had been soaked and then dried in the sun with all my clothes on.

The natives only grunted for reply.

I gave it up. I knew too well that if a Kanaka will not speak you cannot make him. Still dazed and puzzled I sat on the canoe platform and watched the outline of the reef grow wider, the impending bulk of land rise darker and higher. They paddled the canoe towards an opening in the reef, where black, smooth water broke the pounding foam. They took her through. They glided cautiously, as one who hardly knows his way, across the lagoon within, until the leaning palm trees on the shore had come very near. Then in the intense black shadow of the palms they grounded the canoe, leaped out, and pulled her up the beach.

"Get out," they said to me. I did not know their dialect, but the sense was unmistakable.

Perhaps I might under ordinary circumstances have disputed the question. To be abandoned in the middle of the night, in the dark, on an unknown island is not a fate that most women would accept without protest. But I was still suffering in some degree from the effects of the blow that had marked my forehead, and I obeyed as if hypnotized. They

did not touch me or try to hurry me out of the canoe; on the contrary, they withdrew to its far end as I climbed out over the bow.

Scarcely was I fairly landed on the beach when they had the canoe by its sides, hauling it off again with feverish haste. They jumped in almost before it was afloat, and paddled away as if the devil himself were after them.

"Hoo-hau-hoo!" I heard them shouting exultantly. . . . "Hoo-hau-hoo!" Their voices died away in the tumbling smother of the reef; the open seas beyond swallowed them up, and it was as if they had never been.

And I was alone.

I might have been more frightened had I been more myself. As it was — with that dull, hypnotized feeling clinging about me, and veiling half my faculties — I was not greatly dismayed. Indeed I was conscious of some relief at the departure of the two natives. They did not like me — or something about me — of that I was certain. Well, they were gone, and the rocking and splashing of the canoe had ceased, and under the palm leaves that cut great swathes of black among the tinseled stars it was very still. That and the softness of the sand in which I stood exerted a suggestive influence in my trance-like condition. I yielded to it and lay down. In a moment or two I slept.

It must have been real sleep, unrelated to the stupor in which — I know now — I had passed the whole day and part of the night. I don't know how much farther in that interminable night it could have been when I woke up. But I felt restored, rested, and — oh, God! — clear in mind once more.

It all came upon me with blasting force. I knew who I was and what had happened. I remembered

the scene in the church — the yet more terrible scene in the vestry. I realized that I did not know what had been the outcome of that last horror. Had one of the men who held my destiny between them killed the other? Was that one now arrested, in jail, in danger of — I could not form the word . . .

I remembered — oh, I remembered! "Forger . . . bigamist. . . ." And the silence that met the charge.

"Oh!" I cried, as the truth fell upon me like a shower of stones. I ran in the dusk up and down the silent beach, shaking my hands about as people do in the pictures and in plays. If I had been able to think I would have known then that the gestures commonly named "theatrical," "affected," are in truth neither the one nor the other. They have not their birth in the theater, but in the heart of mankind.

"What shall I do?" I cried, as every one does cry in extremity of sorrow. "What shall I do? How can I go on living —"

And there I stopped, for I had remembered something else — the wild rush along the lane ways and the gardens, over the cliff to death. I had gone as my mother had gone — but I had not met her fate.

What had happened? Memory was of no use here. I could only guess.

The bruise on my forehead and the swollen finger helped me. I was a clever diver, and not afraid of a good height — twenty feet or so. But I had never supposed that any one, save the few famous divers known to all the world, could fall through a hundred feet of air and live.

It seemed plain, when I thought matters over,

that in falling I had, partly by chance and partly by instinct, flung myself into the only position that could have saved me. The condition of my hand was a proof. It must have struck the water first, and my head must have been almost — though not quite — protected by the arch of the arms and hands; else the stunning bruise on my forehead would have been a fracture of the skull.

What had happened next? A canoe had picked me up. I must have been floating about in the water, possibly some good way from land. The natives in the canoe had probably seen my fall from the full height of the cliff and picked me up, supposing me to be dead. Then I had recovered, and they had instantly made up their minds that I was a sorceress of some kind, since from their point of view no woman — especially no white woman — could live through such a fall. The Hawongas and the neighboring groups, though nominally Christian, are seething under the surface with sorcery and magical beliefs. It must have seemed to the natives a foregone conclusion that I had supernatural powers, and was consequently a being to be feared and to be got rid of as soon as possible.

Yes, that part was clear. It was not clear, however, where I was and what was to become of me. I had no idea how far the canoe might or might not have carried me. The remains of Friday's storm still hung about Port Hervey in the shape of a stiff, steady breeze and a rolling sea. Before that breeze the canoe, running all day and half the night, might have taken me over a hundred miles away. I tried to remember the look of the map eastward and southeastward of Hawonga, but I could not recall anything about it save an impression of large blank spaces of sea, with here and there an insignificant

dot or two. . . . If the canoe had been a very fast one and the wind very strong and steady all day it was just possible that I might at that moment be ashore on the outermost of a small inhabited group about a hundred and sixty miles from Port Hervey. It had a couple of plantations on it and a cattle run; white people lived there — even a white woman or so. . . . Yes, that was possible.

I did not long continue to speculate. After all, what did these things matter? There was only one thing on earth or heaven or sea that did matter; the thing that had happened in Port Hervey church. What was to come after I could not see. The impulse towards death that had at first possessed me was gone, and it had left nothing in its place. How was I going to live?

Of the rest of that night I will not speak. Look back yourself. Remember the one terrible night of your life — the night that closed that day which changed all things, and left "life never the same again." . . . You could not tell it. Nor can I.

It must have been very near the morning — I, sitting as I had sat and lain for hours on the soft sand at the edge of the lagoon, with the night owls wailing behind me in the bush, and flying foxes scolding and scuffling in the paw-paw trees — when the black tide that had overwhelmed me began its backward flow. There is always that backward flow; if not, few human beings would live to see thirty years. And its name is "After all. . . ."

"After all. . . ."

He was not dead. That was the one thing intolerable, and it had not happened. He still inhabited the same earth; still saw the same suns rise and set; was still rich in the infinite possibilities of the years to come. Luke, indeed, might be dead. I, who

had seen him confronting England's terrible strength for the second time, had little faith in the possibility of a second escape. But I felt that the death of my old boy comrade, or the man who claimed me for his wife, would sadden my life only, and with so much sadness overflowing it already, what was a little more or less?

England, Harry England, was, they said, a forger and a conscious bigamist; he had written a letter in another man's hand and falsely signed it; he had stood before the altar with me, knowing that he was not legally making me his wife. I could not realize these things. I told myself they were true; that there was no way of getting round the facts. . . .

"Well, then," said the ebbing of the wave, "let them be true. Let it be true that he is utterly unworthy of your love. Let it be true that you can never hope to be his wife. Let all that, the worst possible, be true. It cannot alter the fact that you love him and he loves you, and you are alive on earth together. You never wish to see him again? Let it be so. Be content, if not content, resigned to:

> "Love as the angels may
> With the breadth of heaven betwixt you."

At least, at last, at worst, you have love. . . .

So said the ebbing of the tide.

And Luke Ivory? What if no harm had happened to him (please God, it had not) and if he were still determined to part myself and Harry England?

Undoubtedly he could do so. It was just such a contingency as this that the marriage at Hiliwa Dara had been designed to prevent. Concerning that matter, I understood the law.

Do you wonder that I had so much knowledge of divorce and its conditions? You would not had you ever lived in a Love Island. Divorce is the other half of the fruit, the other side of the shield, in those Circean lands. Even a convent-bred young girl like myself could not escape hearing the discussions of bonds broken and to be broken, of partners changed, of desertions, citations, and so forth that were only too frequent in Hawonga. I knew quite well that if I deserted Luke and refused to live with him he could divorce me, but that so long as he was willing to hold to the bond between us I had no power to break it.

As to any elements of right and wrong in the matter I, though brought up with the ordinary decent woman's horror of divorce, could not feel that either right or wrong was in question here. This marriage of mine was no marriage in the sight of Heaven — or I at least could not believe it to be so. Heaven might demand — I believed it did — that I should give up Harry. I could not think that any power above or below demanded that I should hand myself over to Luke instead. I should leave him, and refuse to have anything to do with him, and by and by, no doubt, I should die of a broken heart, and that would simplify everything for everybody.

Of that mad leap to death I did not care now to think. I was ashamed of it. The ugly word "heredity" whispered in my ears — you must remember that this was in the days when every fault or weakness of the parents was supposed to reappear inevitably in the children — and I liked it no more than any other young thing likes the suggestion that he, or she, is not a being self-complete, owing naught to any one. I didn't want to think that I was my

dead, foolish mother. I wanted to think that I was myself.

So I put the remembrance of the leap over the cliff aside, and with it all thought of any other short cut out of my difficulties and sorrows. Of course, I should die some time soon, picturesquely, in a white robe and an armchair, like La Dame aux Camélias (of whom I had seen pictures), but that was another matter. Luke would be sorry; Harry, naturally, would break his heart and die, too; I thought I should like that, on the whole. . . .

And in the midst of all this the curtain of the night rolled back, the sun leaped out of the lagoon, and I saw that I was — alone.

This was not the plantation group of islands. This was not any place that I knew anything about. So far as I could see from the low ground of the beach it had no signs of life. It seemed that I was marooned.

In Europe the word means nothing; it is a mere archaism, like terms that deal with piracy. But in the world of Oceania, so much greater than the little segment that holds all civilization, thousands of miles away, many strange old words of sea life are living and active yet. Barratry — you do not know, until I tell you, that that means ship murder, the killing and sinking of an innocent vessel; yet it is so common in the island world that the insurance companies take notice of it, and " load " policies to correspond with the risk. Mutiny — it is an affair of boys' cheap stories to you in Europe. But to the man who runs his schooner with Melanesian labor, it is, sometimes, fights that fill decks with blood, and masts with dead, mutilated bodies tied to them, nodding and bowing to the roll of a

deserted ship. Marooning — you think it a buccaneer word of West Indian pirate days. There are skulls bleaching white on far-out cays and atolls in the Pacific world that could tell another tale, an' if they spoke . . .

I knew all about marooning. I recognized that it had befallen me.

The light was growing clear; the palm trees stood as black as sticks of charcoal against an orange east. I gathered myself up and began to take stock of the situation. First, my hair was down, and my dress — sea-wet and sun-dried — in a state of terrible disorder. I did not see why I should be dirty and slovenly because I was marooned, so I twisted up my hair and put on my hat — it had been with me when I woke up in the canoe; no doubt the natives had found it floating about and secured it. I rearranged my dress as far as possible; I pulled up my stockings and laced up my shoes, and started to explore. Even if life, as I had hitherto known it, had come to an end for me; if I had no future and an uncertain present — still I had to find out where I was and what was going to happen to me, now, to-day.

Being island reared I did not waste time attempting to make my way through uncut forest. I picked out the largest tree in sight, saw that it was easy to climb, and started up it without further delay. The first thing necessary was a general view. Was the island large or small? Inhabited or uninhabited? Wooded or partly clear? I wondered, as I climbed from bough to bough, going higher and higher up, past the undergrowth of nutmeg and maidenhair palm and paw-paw trees, past the trunks and tops of half-grown cocoanuts and wild mango trees, aiming always at the pale blue patch of sky that showed

among the topmost branches of the great ironwood I had chosen to climb. . . .

And at last, clinging hard, and trembling a little for fear of the depth I saw beneath me, I came out in the highest fork of the tree, where it was thin and elastic, and shook to the rising wind. And I saw, low and bright and clear, the whole island extended underneath.

It was small, partly cleared and partly forested. It was a solitary island; there was no other land in sight as far as I could see from the tall tree summit. And it was — *not* — uninhabited.

"Oh, goodness gracious!" was my unromantic but natural cry.

There was a house, about half a mile from the shore, standing in the midst of a good-sized clearing. It was a better house than one would have expected to see in that remote place — two-storied, built solidly of what looked like white stone, but was, I knew, sawn coral from the reefs. I could not see any people moving about it, and no smoke went up from the cookhouse at the back.

"They are late risers," I thought, beginning to scramble down the tree. "Thank Heaven for them, anyhow, whomever and whatever they are."

There was a little way to walk along the beach before reaching the path that I had noted in my reconnoitering. I planned as I walked. The people who owned the place (I wondered what they did with it) would of course have some kind of a vessel; I had seen no signs of one, but she might have been sent away to Hawonga or Tahiti. I could borrow her to return to Port Hervey . . . if I wanted to, of course. Did I want to? I was not entirely sure about this. I had not so far had time to plan what I was going to do with myself and my

life — which, of course, would not be long; there was that business of the white dressing gown and the thin, pathetic figure coughing and blessing in her chair somewhere not very far ahead. . . .

Well, did I want to go back?

I didn't know. I did know that I wanted tea and breakfast, and clean clothes, and a bed to lie down in. I wondered what the people would be like.

I found the pathway, a winding track, cut through cool forest, and graveled with white coral.

"They are tidy people, and like things to look nice," I thought.

It was some way to the house. At a turn of the track I was confronted by a magnificent mass of bougainvillæa, arching across from side to side. The rustling blossoms, purple as a bishop's robe, had fallen so low in the center that they scarce left space for me to walk underneath.

"They are artistic people," I thought with some wonder, for the training of the flowers had clearly taken thought and time. "But they should cut these — Oh!"

Before the drooping barrier of the flowers I stopped. It was not because a few great spikes of blossom, low-hanging, almost barred my way; a movement of my hand would have swept them aside. It was because I had seen a spider web — one of the immense, yellow-silk webs of the tropic world — stretched from blossom to blossom, right across the path. It was not a new web; it was several days or weeks old — I could not tell which; but the number of butterflies caught in it and, more, the presence of a bag of eggs, showed that it must have been in place some good while.

" The people," I said, slowly and aloud this time. " The people are away."

I put aside the web and hurried along the last few turns of the path. In the midst of a sea of early sunlight stood the house, white, silent, blind. Beneath the veranda of the lower story ran a row of those long doors that take the place of windows in many Pacific houses; I supposed they had the usual glass upper panels, but all were protected by louvered shutters drawn across. The upper story was a repetition of the lower. The house looked to me to be new; indeed, the clearing itself, so far as I could judge, was not an old one — here and there the traces of a " burn-off " were still visible. The house was not set on piles, but on a raised platform of stones sloped into a terrace. Among the stones grew numbers of small creeping plants with pink and white flowers. The pillars of the veranda were twined with purple bougainvillæa.

" Whoever they are," I thought wonderingly, " they have a great fancy for bougainvillæa." I wished that the fancy had taken any other form; the royal flowers reminded me too vividly of the little white bungalow in Hawonga, and all that had happened there. . . .

" I must not think," I said to myself, " or I shall go mad. I'll find out all about this house; that will keep me from remembering for a little while."

A strange figure I must have looked, had any been there to see, that early, beautiful morning. My clothes were stained and torn, my hat was broken, my hair in a long plait trailed down below my waist. On the empty space of the concreted veranda floor my shoes went tapping, tapping with a noise that seemed curiously loud, as I went from door to door,

trying the fastenings of the shutters and finding, in every case, that they were secure.

"But I must get in," I said to myself. "If I can get in I shall be queen of the whole island, and live as I like, and no one, no one at all, will come to trouble me for ever so long." The idea, as French people say, "sang to me."

Apart from all that I had felt and suffered in the last few days — apart from the wounded creature's impulse to hide itself — I was gripped by an emotion, a fancy, known to almost all mankind. Who had not had the dream of finding a deserted house somewhere very far away — a house all prepared for living in, but empty of inhabitants? Who has not pictured to himself the royalty of sole possession?

This fairy tale had hold of me. I almost forgot my troubles in hunting, breathlessly, for an opening; in regretting that none could be found; in running to the woodshed and fetching the wood ax that I knew would be there and battering, with all the strength in my healthy young arms, at the shutter that covered one of the doors.

It gave way easily enough; in the islands fastenings are not made to stand a siege. It disclosed, as I had expected, the usual pattern of glass-paneled door, locked inside.

This was a disappointment. I might, of course, break the glass, but I could not easily get through the opening of the pane. Besides, some instinct — I scarcely know what — warned me not to denude the house of its defenses by rendering a door useless.

"They would not take the keys away with them," I thought. "There would be no sense in that. They've hidden them. And, of course, they only hid them to keep them from wandering natives, so

they won't have hidden them very cleverly. Now where would I put the keys if I were locking up to go away?"

I walked all round the house and through the woodshed. No likely looking hiding place commended itself to my fancy until I reached the range of corrugated iron tanks that received the water from the roof.

"That will be it," I said, and immediately crept under the tanks. Beneath the third tank, hung by a leathern string, I found the missing keys.

The door that I had unshuttered was not hard to open; I found its key almost at once. I almost ran into the house. It was such an adventure!

. . . Darkness and dust and long rays of sunshine slanting through the louvers. A large room front, a large room back. Smaller rooms, oblong in shape, at each end. Furniture and ornaments showing out, as one's eyes got accustomed to the gloom. A billiard table in one of the small rooms. In the front large room, a polished floor, shining like water in the darkness of deep forest; rugs of lion and leopard skins; clubs and spears and savage helmets of forms unknown to me upon the walls; I saw here none of the cane and basket furniture almost inevitably found in island houses. The chairs and couches were of carved brown wood, inlaid with figures of pearl. A faint, delicious smell pervaded the whole room. I could not name it at first, until I bent in the dusk to examine the pearl inlay upon an armchair, and then I recognized it for sandalwood. The whole suite was sandalwood, the rare, the treasured. . . .

"It must have cost goodness knows what," I thought, going on with my investigations.

There were no ornaments in the room save two,

the Venus of Cnidus and the "Boxer" from the Vatican, magnificently reproduced, not in marble, but in wood. A touch of genius, truly, this last choice; marble in an island home would have looked hopelessly out of place, while in wood the Boxer's gnarled, majestic seated figure, and the voluptuous beauty of the Venus, stooping slightly on her pedestal, answered with harmonious tones of brown to the rest of the brown room.

I looked at the Boxer with tempered admiration; I thought him great but brutal. The Venus — not one in spite of her celebrity usually chosen for drawing-rooms — troubled me somewhat. I did not wish her to be there; it seemed somehow or other to be "like her cheek . . ." though I could not have said why. The mind of a girl is a curious compound. . . .

Upholstery there was none; no prudent furnisher uses it, in countries where centipedes and scorpions abound — but cushions of blood-colored satin, larger than I had ever thought cushions could be, were scattered recklessly everywhere.

The walls were paneled in a certain beautiful island wood, deep rose in color, veined like some exquisite mineral, and faintly scented like a flower. I do not know its name; I think it has never seen the European markets. The tables in the room — there were but one or two — were sandalwood and cedar. Evidently the owners of the place, whoever they might be, had a liking for beautiful tropic woods, and a fine taste in selecting them.

I stood in the center of the room, my eyes, by now, accustomed to the cool dim light that filtered through the louvers, and looked at it all with satisfaction. I almost felt as if I owned it.

"They must be interesting people," I thought,

recalling the usual well-to-do island home, with its glass and brass hanging lamps, its suites of tortured basketwork cushioned with screaming plush, its eruptions of "hand-painted" landscapes in gilt frames, and staring photograph enlargements, and idiot-asylum pictures of the eternal baby and eternal dog. . . .

The room that corresponded was a dining room. I pulled back a door and opened a shutter or so, to get a good look at what seemed the strangest and most original room I had ever seen.

It was all dead white and dead black. White-cemented floor, with lines and corners of black tiles; rugs of black skins; chairs, tables, and sideboard of island ebony, in plain, massive "mission" style; white-enameled walls. Round the top of the room, under the white wood ceiling, ran the sole note of brilliant color — a narrow band of orange, edged with black. There were two pictures, large oil paintings framed in black, and set into the wall at each end. One represented an Arctic scene — snow, icebergs, Polar bears; the other was an extraordinary and (to me) alarming picture of a graveyard in deep night, each pale ghost seated on its own tomb, beside its marble statue or broken column. The spirit figures were drinking and pledging one another, with bows, and lifting up of shadowy goblets. It must have been a copy of an eighteenth century picture, for all the ghosts wore the dress of Watteau's day — wigs that seemed made of mist and cloud; long coats and spreading hoops, transparent as steam; there were even the ghosts of patches on phantom cheeks, and spectral fans that waved in no mortal wind. Snow was on the ground, and an icy moon looked down.

I did not know what to think of this "memento mori" over a dinner table. I shut the louvers

again, locked the doors, and went upstairs, wondering what kind of a house I had come into.

There were other surprises waiting. The first room I entered was a woman's.

The furniture here was much more commonplace than in the rest of the house, but (to my eyes) much pleasanter; pale blue walls and matting, patterned with white lilies; white and blue dressing table with silver handles; immense triple cheval glass (I fled from the ragged, untidy image it gave back to me), bright Alma-Tadema and Albert Moore reproductions, framed in silver — girls and marble terraces and flowers. There was a delightful little bathroom, with a white bath supplied from an overhead tank; a long wardrobe, rich in hooks, drawers, and shelves. I noticed that the furniture was covered in pale blue linen, lily-embroidered.

"I like her," was my comment. "Almost any woman would have had silk in such a room — and that would have spoiled it. How fond she is of lilies!"

For all the toilet china and the pretty dressing-table set were patterned with white lilies, and the blue matting on the floor, and the linen window curtains — white without, blue within, were lily woven, lily-embroidered. There was nothing very original, perhaps nothing artistic, about the room, but it delighted me. It was the very soul of a girl.

I began to grow curious about this unknown woman. I peered and pried shamelessly. She had left a lot of shoes in the white, silver-hinged and handled shoe cupboard — what shoes! kid, satin, patent leather, morocco, linen again. . . .

"Oh!" I cried, laying greedy hands on two pairs at once — a pair of suède, silver-buckled, exquisite blue-green in color; a linen pair, with lily-broidered

toes. "I simply must try these. But they'll be too big." For I was proud of my slender two, with the high arch and the delicate ankle, so difficult to fit.

"Oh!" I said again, in a different tone. "She has as small a foot as I have." I felt almost disappointed. I sat there with the shoes in my hand, wondering what she was like: was she married or single; how many people lived with her out here; why they lived in such a place; why one had never heard of them. . . .

I put back the shoes — the oddest thing about them was that none of them seemed to have been worn — and peeped within the wardrobe and the drawers. They contained no clothes, but a number of beautiful pieces of silk, crêpe, embroidered lawn and linen, pineapple gauze from the Philippines, flowery stuffs from Canton.

"She took her clothes with her when she went," I thought. "Or — perhaps —"

The unworn shoes, the silent, untenanted room seemed to take on a different aspect, with the thought that came to me.

"Perhaps — she is dead."

It seemed to me that she must be dead. Now that I had thought of it, everything fitted in with the idea. I had already noticed that this little room was curiously unused and fresh, compared with the others, which had apparently seen some wear. "She has died," I thought. "And they shut up her room, just as she left it, and never used it again. I shall call her Lily."

The romantic thought stayed with me, as I looked into the other rooms on the top story. I did not find them so interesting; perhaps because I was beginning to feel the effects of fatigue and hunger.

The largest room was a bedroom, not newly furnished; a curious, bare, handsome place, running right from back to front, and opening on to the verandas with great glass doors that could be slid entirely away. It had an immense Dutch bed, of the kind familiar to Malaysian travelers — seven or eight feet square, so as to leave ample room for coolness and comfort on the hottest night. The net was rolled away. The four posts that commonly supported it were made of four New Hebridean idols, with grinning teeth, tongues protruded, and eyes of mother-o'-pearl.

There was no washstand, but across one corner of one room, on a stand of heavy carved wood, had been fixed one of the cockle-shaped Tridacna shells that island people know, whiter than any marble, deeply fluted inside and out, and fully three feet across. Smaller shells, and carved cocoanuts dark with age and hard polishing, were fixed above the great white basin of the clam, to hold different kinds of toilet apparatus. But the bath in the corner opposite fairly took my breath away. It was set on a bed of white cement; a shower had been hung above. It was about seven feet in length, and it was a shell — another Tridacna Giga, of the long variety, ice-white, and immensely fluted. I don't know what it could have weighed. I have never seen another like it, but I have heard of one — in a reef passage between two of the Solomon Islands, known to and coveted by more than one traveler, but unattainable, because it could not be loosened from its deep-sea bed without the aid of divers, diving dresses, tools, and a powerful crane. . . .

Apart from this unique washing apparatus, the room contained nothing at all but a few sets of dumb-bells ranged on the wall, a long slip of mirror

close to them, and a number of weapons, swords, rapiers, sabers, bayonets, daggers, fencing foils, arranged in circles and stars. There was no carpet on the scrubbed white floor. There was only one table, of white wood, sanded clean; there were two plain white wood chairs. The room, with its glass doors thrown back, and the all but perpetual south-easter howling through, would have realized every ideal of a hygienic specialist of the fiercest kind.

Like all shut-up-rooms, it was a little musty now, suggesting dust and paint and hardened soap. There was just a whiff of tobacco somewhere or other.

I ran across to the last room. This was a library, full of books protected by air-tight, glass cases.

"Pooh!" I said, glancing at the titles. They seemed ineffably "stuffy." . . .

By now I was almost starving, and food was the only thing I could think about.

"That fourth room downstairs will be the store," I said, jingling my keys. It was. I found plenty of tinned goods of all kinds, and a number of different sorts of biscuits; jars of tea and coffee, sugar, and all sorts of groceries. There was also a Primus stove and a store of kerosene.

"Well, we sha'n't starve here," I said to myself, with satisfaction. I had just discovered something that delighted me, and gave me a still better opinion of the defunct "Lily" and her tastes — a small press full of candies of many kinds, chocolates, creams, preserved fruits. . . .

"But I think you were a little greedy, Lily," I remarked, filling my mouth with fondant. "You laid in plenty when you were at it. Perhaps you ate too many of them, and that was what finished you off."

The supply was certainly large, and astonishingly varied. I wondered more than ever what these people could have been like, who had uncarpeted rooms, and bought copies of Vatican masterpieces; who stocked the pantry with the contents of a confectioner's shop, yet kept almost no wine and spirits, where the ordinary island house would have had a liberal store. I had noticed that there was only one case of light beer, a few bottles of whiskey on a top shelf, and a dozen or two of some sweet Spanish wine. This, in an out-of-the-way spot where ships could call very seldom, was almost a certificate of temperance.

The kitchen, separated from the house, after tropic fashion, was well stocked with cooking apparatus, and I found a set of excellent Pekin china. I brought in the Primus, made myself tea, and warmed up the contents of one or two tins. It was the first real meal I had had for more than thirty hours, and it refreshed me. When I had done, the world took on a brighter look.

"Things will come right," I told myself, with the optimism of youth. "They will come right because they simply must. Nobody's dead — I am sure I should feel it if any one were. And Luke will have to let me go. I don't see," I went on, "why he should not; I've more than an idea that he and Lorraine have taken a silly fancy to one another. Why, of course that will put things straight. . . . Of course."

"And in the meantime," I thought, wandering out of the kitchen again, along the covered passage that led to the back veranda, "in the meantime, look what's happened. I've found this lovely place, to be all alone in, away from every one, until they find me again. Why, it is just what I would have

wished, if I'd ever thought of such a thing. Alone — alone! How delightful it is to be alone."

It occurred to me now that I had never been alone in my life. Never had I lived in any house where there was not some well-known presence always within sight or hearing, generally within actual touch. Never had I been able to do exactly what I liked — rise when I liked, sleep when I chose, eat when and what I preferred, stand and stare in the glass as long as I wished, without danger of interruption from people who never would understand that one was not admiring one's beauty (as older folk always think) but simply trying, for the fiftieth time, to discover the one and only perfect way of doing one's hair. . . .

Well, it was mine at last to do exactly as I pleased. I was alone.

"Hurrah!" I shouted, clapping my hands, and striking my foot on the veranda. Then I stopped suddenly, and was silent, my arms hanging down at my sides, my mouth a little open, my eyes staring.

What was it?

I didn't know. There was nothing in front of me but the empty, sunburned space of the clearing before the house, russet-colored, full of midday light as a lake valley is full of water. But I had felt, just for an instant, as if the place had a personality; as if it looked at me. . . .

I did not like the feeling at all; it was indescribable, but dismaying. I pretended to myself, with more or less success, that I had not felt anything.

"There's too much sun here," I thought. "There's too much — something — I don't know. . . . Oh, I think I shall go upstairs again and hunt Lily's room for clothes. I sha'n't be able to go on

long with what I stand up in." I made a great deal of noise as I went upstairs again. Curiously, I did not want to make it, but I obliged myself.

In Lily's room, after a good deal of hunting about, I found a drawer full of beautiful kimonos, many-colored as butterflies.

"They are far too good," was my thought, as I turned over the embroidered crêpes, the gold-crusted silks. "But they will do all right; the thin ones will make underclothing, with just a little cutting and stitching up." Lily's sewing machine I had already found; it was a small one of the kind alleged "silent," and it had scissors and thread in the drawers. "What did they do with her stockings when she died?" I wondered. "She must have had lots of lovely ones, with all those shoes — Oh!" . . . I had found the stockings, underneath the last of the kimonos. I don't know how many pairs there were. All were of real silk; we had no artificial silk in those years.

"I wonder," I said to myself, holding up a pair of Lily's stockings to the light, and admiring the pearly-blue color and the white butterfly on the instep, "if Lily was really quite, quite respectable? These stockings seem almost too — Well, I never!"

The pair I had unearthed this time were sea-shell pink, and they had a silver-gray mouse embroidered halfway up the leg!

"*Now* I am perfectly certain she was not," I said virtuously. "No respectable girl would wear such things." I pulled off my own stockings and put on the wicked pink things with the wicked mouse (it made it worse that there was no mouse on the second stocking). I liked myself in them very well.

"I'll keep them on; I have had no clean stockings to-day," I said to myself. "One must have clean

stockings!" But I had to take them off when I went to the bathroom for a bath, and a change into a selection of Lily's doubtfully moral clothes. I tied up all deficiencies with a sash cut off one of the lengths of silk, and surveyed myself in the glass.

"Dear me, I put on the stockings again," I thought. "Well, I shall keep them for a bit. What a pity there's no one here. I do like that kimono and sash." Then I remembered that I was, of course, very glad indeed to be alone. . . .

It was because the shoes were so high-heeled, I told myself, that I did not put any of them on. I liked better — I was sure I did — to walk about on the smooth floors and verandas of the mysterious house, silent, stocking shod.

It was wearing on in the afternoon now, and things began to look different. I had not guessed they could change so, in the course of a few hours. I had not known that the yellow of the low sun could seem wicked, and the trees turn poisonous green; that the sea, as night drew on, could sound so much louder, without change of weather or wind. It talked, I thought, away down there on the empty shore, of Death and Eternity. I had sought Death and Eternity, not many hours before; but now the names of them terrified me.

I was afraid. Of what, I did not know. Who that has met with what I met, in the lonely places of the earth, can name the thing he fears?

I went into the house before the sun had touched the horizon; I found the lamps and lighted one. I collected some provisions, and took them with me into Lily's room. It was the smallest; I thought I should like to sleep there. I got a mosquito net, made up a bed on the low couch, and locked all the doors. I shut the shutters as well. It was hot

when I had closed out the free night wind from the room, but I was prepared to bear heat. I was even prepared to bear the extra heat of the great kerosene lamp I had brought in with me; there could be no putting it out till day.

Down and down went the sun. I could tell its going by the wicked yellow rays that crept underneath the closed door of my room, as the sunset waned to dark.

"The night comes on that knows no morn." . . .

Mariana's wail had nothing to do with me; but the line haunted me; I could not away with it. As I lay sleepless, appalled by I knew not what, hour after hour, hearing the sea talk, the shutters straining in the wind, the long grasses rustle and rustle out beyond the house, as if something were pressing them aside, I said to myself, again and again:

"The night comes on; the night comes on that knows no morn."

. . . . . .

CHAPTER XII

WHEN I awoke in the morning, after a few hours' troubled sleep, and saw the great lamp blazing away in the daylight, which had forced itself beneath doors and shutters, I could not understand why I had been so foolish as to be frightened. What was there to be afraid of, in a quiet island like this? I got up and dressed, ate my breakfast, and went out to explore. If I could assure myself, in the bright morning hours, that the whole island was as safe and as pleasant as Hiliwa Dara itself, then, I thought, I should not be troubled by nervous fears when the dark came down once more.

Doubtless, I made a curious figure, starting out for my tour in a selection of " Lily's " beautiful silk negligees, tied together by a big blue sash, and crowned by the unhappy remains of my white sailor hat. But I was assured that there was nobody to see.

I went down to the beach, and climbed the big ironwood once more, making, this time, a more detailed survey of the place. I judged the island to be about a mile and a half long, by a mile in breadth. The cleared portion much exceeded the forested part, there was only about a quarter of a mile of heavy timber. I thought, on the whole, that the island had never been very heavily forested; its grasslands looked almost natural. In the center, there was something like gray ruins that excited my curiosity; I promised myself I would explore it. I could see no traces of a plantation anywhere.

There were a few rough fences, suggesting provision for cattle; but no beasts were to be seen.

"If they are going to plant, they will have the boys' houses up by this time," I thought; and I looked for the ranges of brown roofs one expects to see near a plantation house. I saw one roof only.

"That would not put up more than twenty or thirty boys," I thought, with the critical feeling of one who was an owner herself. "I don't think much of their manager. He seems to have done himself and his family pretty well, but left the place to look after itself. . . . Unless, perhaps, he is a sheller. . . . But the beach would smell of pearl shell, and besides I saw nothing that looked like it about the reef."

Indeed it seemed that, so far as one could judge, the island was a home and nothing more. Certain clearings and carryings of earth suggested that a garden had been under way when the owner left the place. There was a nice little jetty on the side nearly opposite to that by which I had come. I noted a patch of young bananas, set out in a shallow gully; and a wide space of earth was netted over with the level green of the sweet potato.

One thing that I saw puzzled me extremely. It looked like a road that led to nowhere at all. I had decided to spend the day exploring the island, and I noted this down for the first place to be investigated.

Then I climbed down again from the tree, with a map of the island fairly marked out in my head, and started.

I found the mysterious road; but when I had found it, I was not any wiser. It was about three yards wide, very well made of beaten earth and sand, with a slight rise in the center to throw off rain. It had a sort of guidepost at the beginning, but there

was no inscription on the post. I walked along it to the end — it took me ten or twelve minutes — and found that the road broke short off into low bush and sand. Near the far end, there was another guidepost, also unmarked. Beyond, there was nothing that a road should lead to — only a rough bit of hill and dale going down to the beach. I could not make it out at all.

The ruins were the next place to investigate. They were farther off than they seemed to be; I was hot and tired with toiling under the fierce sun, by the time I reached them. It was delightful to take refuge, like a spent swimmer come ashore, under the cool winnowing of the windy trees that stood about the stones, rooting themselves among the fallen masonry, and leaning out from heights of piled-up stone.

I recognized the spot at once for a burial place of the semi-mythic chiefs, or gods, of prehistoric times. There are several such places in the Pacific, and though I had not visited any, I had seen photographs of some. This seemed almost an exact copy of the Tui-Tongan tombs, in the Friendly Group, — an immense square of gray-stone blocks, set in a terrace, with a second and a third terrace, diminishing in size, set upon it. As in the case of the Tui-Tongan graves, the stones had no counterpart upon the island, and seemed to have been brought, with labor well-nigh incredible, from some distant place across the sea.

I looked at them without much interest. I have always disliked antiquities of any and every kind; they are, to my mind, inevitably bound up with boresome people and books that are a weariness to read. Perhaps I should be ashamed of this. I don't know. I only know that nine people out of

ten feel as I do, though they are, usually, unwilling to say so. . . .

There was one aspect of this discovery, however, that gave me something to think about. Such graves, I knew, are held extremely sacred by all Pacific people, even by those known nominally as Christians. The existence of a " Tui-Tongan " on the island explained why it had never been made into a plantation. No native would have signed on to work in such a sacred place. It was remarkable enough that any natives had been induced even to do house-building, within call of a Tui-Tongan grave.

" Whoever They are," I said (I had come to call the mysterious owners " They " in my mind) " they can't intend doing anything useful with the place. It would be impossible. But if They live here, why *don't* they live here? Why have they gone away? "

It did not take me more than an hour or two to walk all round. I went by the beach, climbing here and there over barriers of rocks, but finding the way easy, on the whole. The island seemed to me most lovely. I liked the way the forest ran right down to the strand, in places, with exquisite small green lawns enclosed between groves of maupei and utu trees, and pink flowers growing in the grass. When you stood in one of these enclosed green glades, with dark forest to left and right, and sea and white, white sand before you, you felt as if you had found the lost Garden of Eden, and as if you were Eve, with no serpent and no Adam and no Fall.

And you did not want Adam — even if you were, as I was, a girl who had lost her lover but two days before. . . . There is much more than meets the eye in the old Diana myth; in the old tales of dryads and oreads. You will note that the satyrs and the fauns wanted drink and love-making, even in their

forests; not so the followers of the silver crescent, or the maids of forest and hill. I don't know what there is in a girl that so loves the empty woods, the lonely sea, without thought of anything or any one beyond. But I know that, whatever it is, it exists.

That morning, I tasted strange pleasures, delights without name; I fed on honey dews and magic fruits. . . .

What is the use of trying to tell the untellable? You must go to a desert island to find it out; and that you will not do.

About noon, being entirely healthy, and a little wearied, I felt all other thoughts and fancies merge in the one basic need of human nature — food. I finished my circular tour hurriedly — there was not much to see, in the latter part — and got back — to the house.

It seemed like home when I reached it. More, it seemed like my home; I have wondered since whether Columbus ever felt such a sense of proprietorship in his new world as I found, at first, on my deserted island?

Lily and They were becoming shadowy to me now. I was the owner. I walked about the house, after I had eaten, with my hands behind me, criticizing and planning; aware, at the back of my mind, that it was only a kind of game, but nevertheless absorbed in the fancy of the moment.

I would leave the Boxer in the drawing-room, I thought. There was something in his massive strength that I liked — and he was not a beauty-man, which was so much to the good. Photographs of the Antinoüs, the Apollo Belvedere, the Hermes of Praxiteles, had always left me cold. But I felt, somehow, drawn to this dignified villain of the Vatican.

The Cnidian Venus — oh, but she was exquisite — I would not have. I still felt that it — something — was "like her cheek." I almost wanted to slap her. "Stay in your gallery," I thought. "Nobody wants you here."

The Arctic picture should remain certainly. And the other, the cold ghosts coldly fêting one another under an icy moon — well, it was calculated to give one shivers of two different kinds, moral and physical, so, perhaps, in this world of burning heats, it might not be so ill placed. But I resolved I would never go into the room after sundown.

Sundown! The word struck me unpleasantly. Sundown — it was a lonely, eerie-sounding name. There was some poetry I had once begun to read — Walt Whitman's — I remembered that Lorraine had taken the volume away. But I recalled a line:

"Where the shadows of sundown fall, on the limitless and lonesome prairie."

That was like it. Like the tolling of a bell — slow tolling, far away. Tolling for the dying of the day, for the coming of the night.

Again, the white high sun rays were beginning to slant low; to turn, as they slanted, into wicked yellow. Again the happy green of the bush was growing vivid, poison-colored. It was the dusk again; it was another night. Hypnotized into stillness, I sat and watched it come, and said to myself, dry-lipped:

"The night comes on that knows no morn." . . .

I went to bed at seven. That night I scarcely slept at all, until the dawn, at half-past five, began, as before, to strike beneath closed shutters and

locked doors. Then I got up, opened the room, put out the lamp, and, wondering, as before, why I had been frightened, lay down and slept, really slept, till the sun was high.

I cannot write — nor would you care to read, if I could — all the history of the week that came after. By the end of it, I was two people, living in two worlds. In the morning, before twelve, I was myself, Dara Hamilton, left alone on an island, expecting to be found and fetched very soon, and contented — almost — to occupy herself meantime with the sewing, the cooking, the washing up and putting away and cleaning and mending and tidying, that belonged to her solitary estate. As soon as the sun began to pass the meridian, another creature peeped out in my mind. By four o'clock, when day was visibly declining, though still bright, the creature was gaining the upper hand, and taking her place in an island that was fast changing into a spot quite other than the island of ten o'clock in the morning. When six o'clock was past, and the last change in the light began, I used to sit, fascinated, trembling, on the terrace to watch the enchanted dreadful yellow and the sinister green come out; to see the sun sink, sink, drop, with a horrid swiftness, down behind the sea, and let the flood of darkness loose upon the world.

Then, with the terrors of night in full cry behind me, I fled to Lily's room, and exorcised my demons, as far as I could, with lamps and locked doors, with some of the despised books, even — they were not all so dry as they seemed, and sometimes even availed to make me forget the miseries that held me. But not one of them ever drove away the persisting, haunting line from "Mariana" that bid fair, in those days, to drive me mad:

"The night comes on that knows no morn." . . .

So I learned the other side of the night world that, in Hawonga, the Love Island, had seemed so fair to me. . . .

Eight days after my coming, I started out for a walk, very early in the morning. I was bound for a spot only half an hour from the house — the pretty little lawn surrounded by forest, and running down to the sea, that I had admired on the day of my coming to the island. But I would not have dared to start late; my one fear, in these days, was that I might somehow or other be delayed on a ramble, and slip, while I was still far from shelter, over the edge of midday into the rapids of afternoon that ran down to the terrible Niagara of night.

I reached the lawn while it was still cool; the dew, in that shady place, had not yet dried off the grass. I had brought a book with me, and work, and some chocolates and biscuits, so that I should not need to return to the house for food. I did not care to stay too much in that house. It was, at night, a tower of strength to me, but in the sunny, empty day, I did not like the sound of my footsteps about its deserted rooms and passages. I had taken more and more to the habit of walking about in my stockings; but even that did not altogether remove the curious feeling always, more or less present, that I must not make a noise — I must not be heard. . . . Why, I could not have told, to save my life.

So, in the daytime — which, for me, meant the hours of the sun's upward flight — I wandered about here and there, looked for ships, gathered shells, and wondered why nobody had yet found out where I was and come to take me away. They would be

sure to find out before long, I was certain. I wished they would make haste. . . .

The lawn and the bay were still and pleasant; there was a scent of pandanus flowers, like heliotrope and new-mown hay; the parrakeets, red and green, were making a chuckling sound among the utu trees. I put down my load of books and work and eatables, and went to the beach, to see if any shells had been thrown up in the night. It was, I had discovered, the best beach in the island for shells.

I found no shells; there had been, in the night, one of those high, sweeping tides that leave little or nothing behind them. Disappointed, I climbed on a group of rocks, and looked into the hollow they enclosed. There might be something there. . . .

There was. There was the remains of a fire.

Only a handful of blackened sticks and white, new ashes; but the sight of it struck me like a bolt of hot steel. It meant that other people had been — probably were at that moment — on the island; and that they were people who, for one reason or another, desired to conceal the fact of their presence.

Robinson Crusoe, when he found the footprint on his lonely beach, cannot have felt more dismay than I felt then. I sprang down from the rocks, and looked, with thumping heart, for other signs of the person, or persons, who had lighted the betraying fire. I found none, but the high tide of the night was enough to account for that. Examining the fire a second time, I saw a fishbone or two, lying half calcined in the ashes. This relieved me a little; it might be that the fire had been made by some fishing party, or canoe-load of natives traveling from island to island, who had landed on the beach to cook a catch of fish, and gone away again.

In truth, I had not seen any other signs of life about the place.

I went back to the house as fast as I could go, and from the upper veranda scanned the island. I could overlook almost everything but the quarter mile of forest. There was nothing moving; no smoke anywhere; no boat in sight. I wondered if I could have been dreaming. And yet — that fire was unmistakably recent. I had even found a semblance of heat in the ashes, when I raked them to the bottom with my fingers.

Now I had something new to think about; yet I found myself more than ever troubled by the approach of night. Nothing seemed to matter half so much in daylight. I began to realize the full meaning of the many prayers which feeble humanity addresses to its many deities, begging for protection from the dangers of the dark. Since childhood, I had felt these prayers, vaguely, to be something of an anachronism; a survival of the Middle Ages . . . In the days upon my desert island — no longer desert, as I feared — I understood that, century with century, human nature and human needs do not change.

I barricaded my doors that night with all the furniture I could move. I slept but little, and every time I closed my eyes I opened them again with a start, fancying I had heard stealthy steps somewhere below, fumbling hands about my door. In the morning, as usual, all night fears seemed foolish, and I made up my mind to disregard what I had seen. It could have been nothing but a fire built by some passing crew of a canoe. There were various big islands somewhere about this part of the seas, planted with cocoanuts and with rubber. A labor vessel might have gone by in the night, carrying

hands to or from the plantations, and some of the crew might have landed for an hour or so.

It sounded very well, till the sun began to decline. Then, as usual, my mind took its evening turn, and I saw fear in every leaf, and horror in every shadow. I should suppose that many people, left utterly alone as I was — I mean really alone, without even a native within sight or reach — must have had just such experiences of the mind's strange rise and fall, with the sunward and nightward roll of the earth, as I had. But perhaps they are too proud — as I am not — to tell of it.

The second night was as bad as the first, with more reason. I had fallen asleep, worn out with two nights' wakefulness, when something, I did not know what, aroused me, and I lay for some time frozen, afraid to move or breathe. The lamp was low; I had turned it down, these two nights, for fear of attracting attention. It gave scarcely any light, so that the strips of sky, star-jeweled, which showed between the louvers of the shutters were clearly visible. While I was lying, still as the dead, breathing quickly, yet suppressing my breath as much as possible, I saw, suddenly, the stars disappear throughout a long, narrow section of the louvers, and as suddenly reappear. There was not a sound — not even a trembling of the floor — but I knew that some one, in that moment, had come to my window, paused, tried to look in, and gone by.

Had it — he — succeeded? I could not tell. The tiny blue point of flame might or might not have been enough to see my figure by. I thought not on the whole, but I would have given much for courage enough to rise and turn out the light altogether. I found it not. Instead, I lay horribly still, and made one more unpleasant discovery in

addition to the many that had crowded on me of late — namely, that the phrase "sweating with fear" was no metaphor. I perspired, lying there motionless, as if I had been climbing a mountain in broad day.

There never was a night on earth so long. When day came at last, I ran to the mirror to look at my hair. I was convinced that it must have turned all white, like the hair of people in stories. . . . There was not so much as one silver thread. I did not know whether I was disappointed, or not.

All that day, I never stirred from the house. I tried to read and sew, but I could not. I wandered restlessly up and down from story to story, looking out through one after another of the shuttered windows, afraid to rest, afraid to eat, almost afraid to think. For now I knew that there were men on the island, and I knew that that night they would return. My only hope was that they might not yet be sure whether I was alone or not. Without doubt, that had been the errand of the scout who had visited me last night.

What the men might be, I tried to persuade myself — at first — I did not know. But when the sun began to slant to the west, and my cowering night mind to come forth, I acknowledged, with cold horror, that I knew but too well. They were Malaita men.

Only Pacific people know how much, even in these present days, is meant by the name. Malaita is one of the largest of the Solomon group; its natives were, and still are, the very worst of the Melanesians. They are cannibals and head hunters almost to a man, ruthless, treacherous, and cruel. Long ago, in the days of the Queensland plantation trade, they acquired the art of using firearms, and

ever since they have kept themselves provided with guns and cartridges, the different rulers of the Solomon group having, apparently, found themselves powerless to stop the illegal trading that keeps up the supply. In order to pay for their arms, they are in the habit of " signing on " to various plantations within the group only, nowadays, but at the time of which I speak, they worked on various other islands as well. They make good enough laborers, when managed with a strong hand, and judiciously distributed among a number of boys from other parts of the Pacific; but at times their natural fierceness and impatience of control blazes out into mutiny; they kill their employer — probably eat him into the bargain — and run away in any boat that they can find.

About the Hawongas, troubles had been caused more than once by parties of runaway Malaita men landing on outer, isolated islands, terrorizing and sometimes murdering the inhabitants and carrying off their goods. I knew, as I have said, that there were some large plantation islands not far out of sight, and that in all probability they employed Malaita labor. And I feared, as night came on, and darkness, and the terrors of the dark, that a party of these formidable man-eaters might have landed on the island, and at that moment might be waiting for the last hours of the night to make an attack on the house.

More and more, as the afternoon went by, this fear gained hold of me, and at last I knew that it was no fear, but a certainty. The Malaita men could not be quite sure that there was no one in the house save myself, but they must be almost sure by now — sure enough for their purpose. If there had been no doubt at all in their minds, they would

have come up boldly in full daylight. Having still some doubt — (probably it seemed strange to them, almost incredible, that I should be there alone) — they would follow their usual plan and attack by night.

There is a curious uniformity about the method of attack followed by all Melanesian tribes. Scarcely ever do they make a raid in the middle of night. They prefer the hour just before dawn, when there is a very little light, and when most people are sleeping soundly, in the cool of the early hours. I knew that, if I had calculated rightly, these Malaita men would wait till near five o'clock, and then —

Merciful God — and then! . . .

I was quite sure that, had there been any one with me — had there been even the remotest chance of any one coming to my help — I should have been in simple hysterics of fright. But there was no one to rely on save myself. Others than I have found that fact wonderfully steadying in great emergencies.

" There's only one thing I have that they have not," I thought, " and that is the white man's brain. It has got to get me out of this, somehow or other."

Shoeless, noiselessly, I walked up and down the rooms of the upper story, thinking as hard as I knew how. " I am far, far cleverer than they," I said to myself. " I must find a way." But it seemed hard to find, and all the time the day was flying past.

One thing occurred to me — I must eat, to keep up my nerve and strength. I had scarcely taken food for two days. I went down to the kitchen, brewed coffee, fried bacon, and forced myself to take a hot meal. Then, feeling stronger, I went upstairs and began a systematic search for the arms that my reason told me were certain to be hidden

away somewhere or other. "They" would not be without arms of some kind, in such a lonely place. There were plenty of daggers, rapiers, swords, hung up on the wall, but I did not trouble about those. In the island world, a gun or a revolver is the only arm that counts. I could use both passably well; father had taught me.

I went through every room; I hunted upstairs and down. I looked on the top of presses and wardrobes, under beds. I peeped behind boxes and pictures, and tapped the brown wood statues in the drawing-room, to see if they were hollow. All this time, day was flying; the hours were speeding down the slope of afternoon to the great gulf of night. But my search was fruitless. I could not find the arms.

"If I could find a place to hide," was my desperate thought; "if I could get up under the roof somewhere, or under the tanks outside. . . ."

But there was no opening in the ceiling of the rooms, and if I made one — if I climbed up and broke through with an ax — I knew that I should leave a guidepost to my hiding place. As for getting under the tanks, I rejected that idea after a moment's thought. Tanks were too obvious; as well hide under a bed. . . .

Under a bed! . . .

I don't know what it was that struck me, just there; what made me stand still and clap my hands together, with the feeling of one who has at last found his way out of a labyrinth. Perhaps some vague memory of things heard or read, long ago, came back under the stress of the moment. Perhaps, as "Jane Eyre" said:

"Nature was roused, and did — no miracle — but her best."

At all events, I went straight to the big upstairs room, and without hesitation crept underneath that immense Dutch bed and looked up. . . .

I saw, concealed by the thickness of the mattress and the great width of the bed, a long, coffin-shaped receptacle attached to the bedstead. I struck it. It clinked faintly in reply.

In an instant, I saw what this discovery was destined to mean for me — not only the finding of the arms, but the security of my own safety. Surely, within that box, so perfectly concealed — for you might look a hundred times beneath the bed, in the ordinary way; you might, as I had done, take off the mattress, and hunt underneath it, without suspecting anything — my slender body and small weight could find a place!

With more hope in my heart than I had yet cared to entertain, I crouched beneath the bed, seeking for the way to open the box. I found that one side could be let down, by unfastening certain strong iron catches. The box, or rather tray — for it had no top save the overlying bedstead — thus exposed, contained six rifles and six shotguns, wrapped in flannel, also half a dozen Colt revolvers, of the reliable navy pattern, and a number of cartridge boxes. Being wide, it was not nearly full. I saw that I could lie comfortably beside the rifles, with room to spare; and that, so concealed, there was every chance of my escaping observation.

By now it was getting late, and the sun was almost down. I went round the lower story, closed the doors, and saw that the shutters were fastened. I had noticed, some days before, that they were not wooden, as they seemed to be, but steel, painted to resemble wood. When they were closed, and the shutters of the upper story fastened also, it would

be impossible for any one to enter the house without making noise enough to wake the dead. I might therefore stay safely on the big bed, and sleep, unless I heard any sound, when I should have to take refuge in the arm chest at once.

I spent the time before dark in padding the rifles and revolvers with all the spare clothes I could find, so that they would not make the slightest clinking noise. I selected a big Colt, and loaded it. I must confess I had but small idea of using it on any native. My thought was that if the worst came to the worst, I should find, in one of those blunt-nosed cartridges, the only possible salvation for myself. . . .

"If I have to," I said, sitting on the edge of the Dutch bed, the big .45 drooping from my slight hand, "I must remember how they do it in novels. He always 'puts the muzzle of the revolver to his temple, and presses the trigger'" . . . With the revolver carefully uncocked, I laid the muzzle against the side of my forehead. Its hard, cold circle felt like the finger of Death himself. I snatched it away, and began to cry.

"All this oughtn't to have happened," I sobbed. "It's horrible. There ought to be some one here to take care of me. Oh, Harry, Harry, if you only knew! How can you be alive, and not know! If Luke knew, what would he think! There's no one. Oh, father, what would you think, if you had lived — you always wanted me to be taken care of!"

I sat, a miserable little heap, in the center of the bed, having my cry out. Then I took up the revolver, and cried a little over that — it looked so hard and cruel — and cocked it, and put it carefully down. And now, it being dark, I began to wander helplessly, restlessly, up and down the house, for once not afraid of the night, but only of that which

it might bring. The greater fear had driven out the less.

I don't know how I passed the early part of the night. It seemed at least a week long. Once or twice I was so tired with my wandering about, my staring into the dark through the louvers of the steel shutters, my strained, fruitless listening, that I dropped into whatever chair came nearest, and slept, until I was startled up afresh by anything — nothing — an owl hoo-hooing in the forest, a frog croaking on the top of the tank — to wander, and listen again. It seemed to me that in those wanderings I realized as fully as any mortal may the feelings of spirits supposed to haunt old houses, restlessly, night by night, forever. I felt that I was haunting. I felt it would never end.

But it did.

I had no watch or clock; it was impossible to tell how the night hours were going. But I judge, by later events, that it must have been nearing dawn when, as I lay half asleep and half awake in one of the long chairs of " Lily's " room, I was flung upon my feet as if by an electric shock. Some one, without the least attempt at concealment, was trying the doors below.

Trying! It was more than that! He, or they, after a tentative push or two, seemed to have fixed on a door; and in another instant an awful din began; the sound of fierce, determined men smashing their way in by the oldest of all devices — a battering-ram. It must have been a tree trunk that they had, and no small one, by the noise. And may God deliver me from ever hearing again such sounds as the yell that accompanied every stroke!

Not many people have heard the island cannibal raising his war cry, and of those who have, few have

returned to tell the tale; for the Papuan and the Melanesian, rank cowards at heart, never attack unless all the odds are on their side.

The horror of the cry lies in the fact that it sounds hardly human. It is somewhat like the howl of a wolf, somewhat like the yelping of angry dogs. "Wooh! Wooh! Wooh! Wooh! Woo-oo!" yapped the savages below, as they ran at the door, and slammed the tree trunk home.

That sound in itself was enough to tell, if one had not known already, that one might as well look for mercy from the jaws of a pack of wolves, as at the hands of these creatures, miscalled men.

Back to my mind, as I fled to the big room, and crawled, panting and shaking, into my hiding place, came the recollection of a body of Malaita men I had once seen marching through Port Hervey, on their way to the boat that was to fetch them home. Beside the gentle, soft-eyed Hawongan men and women, they had looked like a pack of devils out on holiday from hell — so dark as to be almost black; broad-chested, heavy-muscled, their naked bodies flung back from the waist with an inimitable savage swagger, their fierce eyes roving boldly, and meeting the eye of the white man with an angry stare. I recalled their blubber lips and flattened noses, hung, like the snouts of pigs, with heavy rings; their woolly heads stuck full of feathers; the great bundle of clubs and spears carried for them — since they were not allowed to wear weapons in Hawonga — by a frightened native policeman. Seeing them pass, I had felt as one feels at the sight of dangerous animals led by under control. . . . And I was alone on an island with them, and they were loose!

In my hiding place, I lay still as death, scarcely daring to breathe, for the horrible noise had ceased,

the door being down, and the silence that succeeded was still more terrifying. The Malaita men, I knew, were spreading themselves over the house, looking for its inhabitants, and hoping, by their own stillness, to make their victims betray themselves through some movement, some attempt to escape. . . .

"I'm not eighteen yet, and I'm going to die," was my thought; for I could not feel sure that the men would not discover my hiding place. "I wish I could have lived longer. I wish I had been a better girl. I wish I hadn't told lies to Lorraine — and put red on my lips when I went out — and stolen the cake from Dinah that time when I was little — and I wish I hadn't gone to sleep instead of going to church, ever so many Sundays — and made up funny stories with Mabelle about people in the Bible — and run up bills at the Japanese store. . . ." The whole catalogue of my childish sins ran through my mind, as I lay there in the awful silence, knowing that, in another ten minutes or less, I might have to put that cold steel ring to my temple and let loose clean, decent death upon myself for fear of worse. . . .

I tried to put up some kind of a prayer, but I could find none, save "God be good to Harry England, and let us be together in heaven." For I could not fancy my little soul let loose alone in any world beyond the world, without his soul to travel hand in hand with it.

And then hell broke loose.

The Malaita men, satisfied, I do not know how, that there was no man in the house, began to run from room to room, howling their terrible howl, lighting lamps and candles and everything of the sort they could find, seizing on plunder of one sort

and another, as I judged by the cries of satisfaction that broke out from time to time, and hunting — hunting all the time, determinedly, for me.

They had been years on some plantation, in all probability, and had learned pigeon-English while there. Some of it broke forth every now and then in the midst of their own language. "Mary" is the pigeon-English word for "woman" and it came often enough to make my blood crawl in my veins, and my hair crisp on my head.

"Where this fellow Mary him stop?" "Hooh — hooh — hoo-oo!" "Me catchum Mary." "No, you ——, ——, you no catche Mary, him go walk-about." "Me go walk-about, me findem." And another howl.

They divided themselves shortly, some remaining in the house, and some going to hunt the kitchen and outhouses. The tanks were among the first places they went to; I heard them, with horror, poking spears underneath, and even climbing up on the tops to lever off the manhole covers, and stab down into the water inside. If I could have turned colder than I was already, I should have done so then; for I knew by their actions that it was not the first time these men had hunted helpless white people from defense to defense, through hiding place after hiding place, in the dead of night. What poor shrieking soul had they sent to its account, from a body dragged out of the water tank in which it had thought itself so safe? . . .

But the hiding place of the rifles, and of me, defeated them.

That was not surprising, after all; it would have defeated most white men. You could easily look below the bed, as they did; pull off the mattress, and stare at the springs and webbing underneath, with-

out a suspicion that below that mass of springs, seeing, but not seen, there lay, beside the store of rifles and revolvers that were worth their weight in gold, a terrified, trembling girl.

When I saw their dark faces, with the rolling black and white eyes, and the stained, grinning teeth, actually bending over me, I turned so sick that I was afraid a sudden attack of nausea might betray me and settle the matter once and for all. But I bit my under lip right through, and the running blood cured me. It was, after all, but a very few moments before they removed the big lamp they were holding over the bed and turned away. And in the relief, I came nearer to fainting than I had done that night.

I heard them, then, thumping and padding down the stairs, quarreling, it seemed, over the distribution of their booty, and snarling at one another because nobody had found myself. Afterwards, there was a silence, which lasted so long that exhausted Nature had her way and I fell asleep.

I awoke to full sunlight and the sound of voices on the terrace below. I thought I must be delirious, for the voices seemed to me — it was impossible, surely! — like those of Luke Ivory and of Dinah.

My legs were so stiff with the long imprisonment that I had some trouble getting out. But I managed it, and hurrying to one of the windows saw, through the shutters, with incredulous amazement, Dinah and Luke indeed.

If it was not their ghosts, they were there, standing on the concrete terrace that surrounded the lower story, examining the smashed door, and talking to one another. There was not a sign of the Malaita men.

I suppose any girl who reads this will believe that

I ran to the mirror in Lily's room, and made a hasty readjustment of myself, before I went downstairs to greet my rescuers; I daresay older people will not. But that is what I did do. A hair brush, a wet towel hastily used, and a sash retied and a pair of shoes slipped on, made some difference in my wild aspect, and did not take two minutes in the doing. Then I ran down to the veranda, and straight into Dinah's arms.

"Come inside, come inside!" I exclaimed, while she was kissing and crying over me — for it had suddenly occurred to me that the Malaita men might be still somewhere about. "It isn't safe here."

"Safe? Why not?" demanded Dinah. "I never see a pleasanter amalgamated house."

"Come inside," I reiterated, dragging at her hand. "There are Malaita men on the island, and they came here last night to kill me, and hunted all over the house, and you don't know but what they —"

"What's that?" said Luke sharply, entering the house with Dinah and myself. I think he had had some very different speech upon his lips, when he saw me; but he realized instantly, as Dinah did not, that I was not in any way crazed by solitude, and was speaking the simple truth.

I told him briefly what had happened. We stood in the sandalwood drawing-room, beneath the smiling, bending figure of the Cnidian Venus, the majestic ruffian of the Vatican looking at us from his seat at the other side of the room. It was dim and cool, and full of the scent of precious woods; the light slanted in through the barred louvers, save where it fell in one unbroken, burning patch through the wrecked doorway.

"What did you come in?" I asked. "Have you

any men? Are they armed? You don't know but the Malaita men may —"

"We came in the only thing available, a launch," said Luke. "When we heard — but there isn't time to explain. I've no one, I ran the launch myself. Where are those rifles and things? Show me as quickly as you can."

I ran upstairs before him, and disclosed the hiding place under the bed. Luke swept a quick glance round the room, as he pulled out an armful of guns and cartridges. I think he would have liked to look about him, and take note of things, had there not been sterner business afoot. As it was, I saw a shadow of curiosity — disapproval — I don't know what — pass over his face. Then he turned to the door.

"I must go down to the launch at once," he said. "If those fellows get hold of it —"

He stopped, in the very act of quickly loading a rifle. A yell of triumph had arisen from the beach, "Hooh-hooh — hooh — hoo-oo!"

"Lord help us!" cried Dinah. "The neegurs has got the launch."

Luke's face did not change color, but I saw his mouth set tight and a strange shine, that I did not know, come into his eyes.

"We're trapped," he said. "They have got the launch. They must have been in hiding at the beach."

"Sir," besought Dinah, "don't you go to try and get it; you'd do no good, and what's to become of miss if they kill you?"

I do not think Luke had had any intention of going forth on that forlorn hope; he was too quick a thinker not to have seen that, under the circumstances, his place was with Dinah and myself. He

put down the rifle, with a sharp breath that was almost a sigh.

"The first thing," he said, "is to patch up this door."

I ran to fetch tools from the carpenter's chest in the kitchen, and brought them to him.

"Thanks, Dara," he said, looking at me almost for the first time. "This isn't an impossible job. Cheer up, we shall be able to keep them off for to-night, anyhow." And he began to hammer and secure. I watched him, anticipating every need that he might have; between us, we got the door made safe in a very little while.

"If they come at that again," he said, "we shall be able to pick them off nicely from inside. It'll be all right." But I saw he spoke more confidently than he felt.

The door being secured, Luke, warning us to keep a lookout while we talked, set his face to one of the shuttered windows, and watching through the louvers, spoke to me.

"In Heaven's name, Dara," (I had known it was coming), "what induced you to do such an awful thing as you did? Had you no conscience, if you hadn't any thought of —"

"How did you hear where I was?" I broke in. "I've been expecting some one to come for ever so long."

"I don't see why you should," said Luke, "when there was absolutely no means of finding out where you were. We all thought you were dead, for nearly a week. The last thing seen of you was —"

I interrupted again. I would not have that subject.

"What happened at the church? I was so

afraid, Luke. I thought Harry would have killed you."

"It was not his fault if he did not," answered Luke dryly. "I have two broken ribs at this minute" (I had noticed that he was moving with a curious stiffness), "and I was knocked out of time for nearly half an hour by another blow. He's a hard hitter." There was a note of something like admiration in his voice — the first I had ever heard, where Harry England was concerned. I marveled over the curious ways of men.

"Not but what I could have held him for a bit," he went on, somewhat eagerly, "only under such circumstances as that, nobody had fair play. They stopped us at once. But — Dara — I can't help it — how could you, could you stand up there before the altar to marry him, when all the time —"

"I told you," I broke in, "it was that letter."

"The letter England forged," said Luke coldly.

"He did not!" I cried.

Luke went on, without minding me:

"You should have known the first marriage was legal. And if you didn't, he certainly did. He may have cared for you —"

"He did. He does!"

"In any case, it was your fortune he was after — principally. I believe he planned it out when you were only a child. Dinah told me"— Dinah, with thoughtful delicacy, had moved out of hearing — "that he came into the kitchen once, and heard her say that you had a half share of the island independently of me. And I know — I've proof — that he visited the island when I was away, and took specimens of crystals down to Sydney to get them analyzed."

"I don't know what you are talking about," I

said. "Harry England had plenty of his own; he doesn't want the half of a silly little plantation like Hiliwa Dara. We all made too much of it."

"Plantation? But I forgot. I didn't tell you. Why, Dara, the place is a mine — a mine of the most valuable kind of crystal in the world — Iceland spar, that they use for optical instruments. There was only one place in the world where it could be got, a farm on the shores of Iceland, where there's a cave — not a big cave — and all the world had been working that cave for over two hundred years. I can even tell you the name of the farm; it's Helgustadir. Well, the price of Iceland spar has been climbing for ages — and I happened to be doing crystallography at the School of Mines, and I came across things that told me — there were heart-shaped crystals and — but you wouldn't understand. Anyhow, the fact is that Hiliwa Dara is a fortune, and a big fortune too. I suspect England knew it long before I did; he's very deeply read. That's his affection for you — that, and an attempt to make you his —"

"Luke!"

"You see, the word isn't even repeatable. . . . He meant to do that so that I should — have to — give you up. That's Harry England."

I was on the near verge of tears, but I managed to speak.

"That's not Harry England," I said. "You hate him, you don't know him. As for the things you say, they aren't true."

"You maintain that, in the face of what every one knows?"

"I can't argue. I'm not clever like Lorraine and you. Only I'm sure, sure, sure, there's another side you have not heard!"

"Why do you say 'Lorraine and me'?" asked Luke for all reply.

"Because," I answered him — for I was now fairly heated —"Lorraine and you have been in love with one another ever since the night of the dance."

Luke, always mindful of the work in hand, sent a quick glance down the avenue, into the empty clearing, before he turned to face me, and to reply:

"I've not given you, or any one, the right to say that. Nor has Lorraine."

"Can you say it isn't true?" I persisted.

"It doesn't matter in the least whether it is or not."

"Doesn't matter!"

"No." He looked at me, with that curious young St. George expression of his — one would have sworn that the sandalwood drawing-room was full of dragons and devils, and that he was vowed to destroy them. "You know," he said, "I don't put the enormous stress on those things that you and . . . that you do."

"Those things! Why, they are life!"

"Only a part of it. If they were life — if they were even the biggest things in it — then, I grant you, marriage wouldn't stand for very much. One could clear out of it the minute one didn't like anything in it. Nothing would stand — everything would go down. Would you like that?"

"Of course not. But what has it to do with Lorraine?"

"Well — this. Suppose I grant for the sake of argument that I have fallen in love with her —"

"And she with you," I persisted.

He went on as if he had not heard me:

"Suppose I broke our marriage —"

" I don't call it that."

" Suppose I married her — always supposing, too, that she would have me, which would be — Well! If I did. There's nearly fifteen years between us. I don't think I should worry about that. But it would mean, to a dead certainty, that she'd start breaking her heart about her age, in a very few years. It always does. It's misery. So, in any case, I shouldn't — that is, I hope I'd have strength of mind enough not to — make hay of her life like that. Now, that's just a supposititious case —"

I made an unbelieving face.

" But I've mentioned it, to show you how I think. . . . Dara, I believe there'll be no attack from those men for the present. It isn't their way to advance in open daylight on a sort of fortress. . . . I wish we had had a quieter occasion to talk things out, but —"

" I don't think I need any quieter occasion. What is there to say? "

" Only one thing — and I don't want you to answer hastily. I mean to hold to that marriage. I would rather see you dead than given over to —"

" Did it never occur to you," I asked him, " that that's pretty much all plain, common jealousy? "

" It didn't — or if it did, I know how much to allow for jealousy, which perhaps can't be left out altogether. It's not a great deal, anyhow. But you won't let me speak. What I wanted to say is this — You were left as a trust to me; your father and my great-grandfather sealed that in the most solemn way that was possible. I take it so still. Everything that's happened lately proves how much it's needed. Well, I propose to go to Hiliwa Dara, go on managing the estate and the mine, and wait there for you, let's say three months or so. You and

Lorraine and Dinah can go south for a change; take a trip to Sydney, and see the world; it will help you to get your values right again. The old people weren't mistaken when they thought that you and I would pull well together. Only for — Dara, if you'd never met that man — if he hadn't — you would have liked me; you did like me, didn't you?"

"Oh, yes, I liked you, and I do like you, if you think that matters," I answered listlessly. "It seems funny that I should, after everything — but then, you're what people call such a decent sort, Luke."

"Well, then?"

"Well, then! I shall always like you, and I shall go and live somewhere or other — I don't care where — and I sha'n't ever marry any one at all, since you won't set me free to marry the man I love — not like."

"You will think differently by and by," said Luke, laughing for the first time his light, boyish laugh again. It made me realize how young he really was, in spite of his curiously mature way of thinking and speaking. "You were made for love and care, Dara, not to stand alone. You'll never do it."

We had quite forgotten Dinah, but she was far from having forgotten us. She came forward now, a large handkerchief in her hand, large glassy tears trickling down her calm, unruffled face.

"Miss Dara," she said, "I'm that glad to see you again, not dead drownded, that I could cry" (overlooking the fact that she was doing so). "And I never knew a thing about nothing, along of that heathen cat Maiera."

I gave a scream. I had realized all in an instant what I and Nurse Elsie and Lorraine should have guessed long ago.

" Yes," said Dinah, swabbing her eyes (she had a mighty relish for a " scene "). " She poisoned me with her wicked drugs to keep me sick so I wouldn't know there was anything being done superstitiously behind my back. If the kitchen girl hadn't stole and ate the limes, and got sick same as me, we'd never have known. I never did like them Eureka people, as they call them, half black and half white. If your old Dinah had of been up and about, dear Miss Dara, you and Mr. Luke would never of been in this trouble to-day, and you lost on a deserted island, and your good clothes ruined, and me finding you here dressed up in all that ribaldry! " She cast a disapproving look at my kimono and sashes, and went on: " Dear Miss Dara, don't you think anything more about anything at all, but just come away with me, as Mr. Luke says, and no one won't bother you about no sort of alimony."

" Matrimony," said Luke, wincing at the word; it was seldom that Dinah's innocent mistakes hit any one quite so hard. " Dinah's in the right, but it'll be time enough to bother about all these things when we've got out of the trouble we're in at present. We'd better not forget that. After all, I shall have the rest of my life to set things right in."

" And may it be a longitudinal one, sir," said Dinah piously.

" Well, now," said Luke, " about these natives. Set your mind at rest, Dara; the worst's behind you, and I don't think there's any serious cause for you to worry now. Poor kid, what a time you must have had last night! " His voice thickened a little; he went on hurriedly: " There'll be another launch along about to-morrow morning. We could get nothing but a small one in Port Hervey when the news came — through the natives — I'll tell you

again — and I didn't choose to take a sailing vessel, because the wind's gone round to the east again, and likely to stop. So I got off in this thing; I knew the engine well anyhow; and I arranged to have the company's big boat sent down as soon as ever she came in, which will be to-night. She ought to be here in the morning. We have only the night to get through."

He spoke cheerfully, but I knew very well that the situation was not so bright as he made out. There were three of us, well armed, it was true; but the Malaita men had arms also, though their guns were none of the best — and doubtless they were determined to leave no witnesses of their raid behind them. As for the launch, that was neither here nor there; they would not go away in her, even though they had seized her, since none of them would know how to handle the engine.

"I wish the company's boat was coming down to-day," I sighed, looking out at the empty sea.

"If I'd had the least idea in the world — but who would have? We must make the best of things as they are. It's time the High Commissioner stopped the recruiting of Malaita men altogether; they are nothing but a curse, and no one would have them if our natives weren't too dashed lazy to do anything." He was looking over the rifles as he spoke, and handling them approvingly.

"Good stuff this," he said. "I must allow he knows —"

"Oh, by the way," I interrupted — for I had remembered something else —"you might tell me how on earth it was that you chanced to come back so soon that time."

"I didn't chance," said Luke, examining the rifling of a barrel. "Dinah sent for me."

"Dinah. How could she?"

"I don't know. She did. She went to the post office —"

"Oh, I remember — but we thought —"

"And she gave the postmaster a telegram. He thought she wasn't in her senses, because there's no wireless, but he humored her by taking it. And, by Jove, the cable ship called in for just one night, and spoke a gunboat that was surveying about Hiliwa Dara. And I got it." He looked round; Dinah was not attending; she was examining, with extreme disapproval, the Cnidian Venus. "It was a funny wire," he went on. "She dictated it to the postmaster —'*Mr. Luke please come back at once she is going to marry him.*' However, it did the job."

"It did," I said, turning to look out of the window, so that he should not see the tears in my eyes. What could one girl do against a world arrayed in opposition? I think, in that moment, I gave up hope.

Luke took command of the house and the situation. One of us, he said, was to keep watch from the front (the back of the house gave on a long stretch of open ground, which they would hardly tackle). For the present Dinah could begin. He wanted to have a look at the house.

"I'll look out as long as you like; there's not much to be gained looking in," stated Dinah. "I never seen anything so entirely obsequious as that one," she jerked a contemptuous thumb at the Venus.

All this time one thought, one question, had been burning in my mind, and I could keep it in no longer. Luke, seemingly anxious to go over the house, was making for the back room, the one with the black and white furniture and strange pictures. I followed him.

He paused on the threshold, looking about him

critically. I saw the wild, disturbing picture of the frozen ghosts catch his eye.

"That's good — very good," he said. "But morbid."

"Luke," I burst out, "where is Harry England?"

He did not turn round.

"I should have thought," he said, after an interval, "that you could answer that question better than any one else. I have been wanting to ask you."

"Me! Why?"

"Because you told — I suppose you told — the natives to bring you here."

"No, they brought me themselves. What do you mean?"

"Do *you* mean to say," asked Luke, suddenly swinging round, "that you don't know where you are?"

"How should I?"

"Will you tell me you didn't know this was Rorona — Harry England's place?"

"No!" I screamed, in an accent that must have carried conviction with it. "Rorona! Never. I didn't know it was anything — just a bare rock — Oh, that was his surprise!" The tears came again — I could not keep them back, though I would willingly have done so, under those unsympathizing eyes. His surprise for me! This lovely home! Why, "Lily's" room was mine! The sweets I had eaten, the clothes I was wearing, had been bought for me. The house — I should have known it! Everything in it bore the impress of his strange, original character, with the curious hint of austerity that gave it its special flavor. The road that led to nowhere — why, that must be the track he used for his running practice. I knew he always had

owned a part of the island; the house and most of its furnishing dated before the war; but the room that was to be my boudoir — that was, no doubt, fitted up by the help of Hawongan and Tahitian stores within the last week or two.

My room — my room — and I had seen them — thus.

"Don't cry — you break one up," said Luke's voice, somewhat unsteadily. "Dara — girlie — don't." He came close to me, but did not touch me. I think he knew I would not have endured it — then. "Your nerves are all upset, and no wonder. Have a rest." He led me back into the drawing-room to one of the couches.

"Oh, you men," I said. "You always think a girl's all right if you can only get her to 'lie down.'" But I dropped on to the couch and lay there, looking across the room at the inescapable Venus. I knew now why, subconsciously, I had hated her so. Something not myself had told me that she was Harry's admiration — a feminine thing he had loved before he loved me. No wonder I had wanted to throw her from her pedestal.

The rest of Luke's explorations were undertaken alone, and he made no comment about anything he saw. Dinah got us some lunch while he kept a look-out. Talk languished later on in the day. We all felt the strain of the situation. Yet it was strange to me to note how differently I felt the waning of this day. Magically the terrors of darkness had vanished; I watched the sinking sun and had no fear.

I suppose it was four o'clock, or a little after, when Luke gave a sudden exclamation.

"The *Lizard*."

"What? Where?" I asked him. I saw that he was staring out to sea, and that his hands, holding the bar of the shutters, were clenched tight.

He seemed hardly to hear me. He sprang back from the window and began looking round the room.

"Are there any flags in the house?" he asked quickly. "Can one fix things to the roof?"

"What is it?" I demanded.

"The gunboat that called at Hiliwa Dara. If we can attract her attention — We must. Aren't there —"

"Why, there's the flagstaff," I broke in.

"A flagstaff, and you never used it!"

"I hadn't any flags. I don't know where they are."

"We can settle that. Where — oh, that's it." He had seen the tall mast standing, not in front of the house, but away to one side, where it could be viewed from all points of the compass. "We have simply got to stop her," he said. His eyes were bright with excitement, his mouth had shut itself into one straight line. I began to understand just how much he had been fearing, up to this, for Dinah and for me — I do not think any question of his own safety had entered his mind.

"If you can't find flags," he said, "we can run up a tablecloth. Why, there is a locker on the mast!"

There was, but it had never occurred to me to break it open. Luke, an ax in his hand, was out immediately, running through the yellow afternoon sunlight towards the signal mast.

"Oh, be careful!" I cried.

"Dearie, Miss Dara, he can't be," said Dinah. "There isn't no way to be. Maybe them devils won't see him."

Not see him! We knew better, she and I. So did Luke know better. I saw he was putting the mast between himself and that fatal strip of forest. . . .

A shot sounded. Dinah and I cried out as if it had struck us.

"Come back!" I screamed.

"I'm not hit!" called Luke, hacking at the locker. He had it open now; was pulling out a jack. "Dinah," he called as he worked, "I must hail the boat, but don't let Dara come out, and don't you, no matter what —"

On the sound of another shot he stopped, and I could see him stumble, like a beaten horse. Then he pulled himself together again. His white coat was red as he fastened the flag to the halyards and began to pull.

Dinah, white but determined, stood beside me in the shelter of the louvered shutters, and kept her arm tight round my waist.

"Let me go," I cried.

"No, Miss Dara," she answered, though she was sobbing. "I won't have my Mr. Luke give his life for nothing. He said 'stay,' and I'll keep you."

"His life — what do you mean? He isn't — let me go!"

She held fast. She pointed silently to the foot of the signal post. Luke had fallen. His head lay back, upturned to the sunny sky, beneath the flag that now streamed out against the blue, half-masted, upside down.

. . . . . .

I have little more to tell.

The *Lizard* saw the signal — trust a man-of-war not to miss a flag calling out distress across five leagues of sea. She was into the roadstead within fifteen minutes; in five more a party of bluejackets, at the double, were coming out of the pathway where the bougainvillæa grew. They seemed to grasp the situation instantly. One of them called to Dinah

and myself, who had run to the doorway, to stay within. Two lifted and brought into the house all that remained of my lover, he who bore the name of my husband. He had kept his trust, indeed. . . .

They chased the Malaita men round the island, and captured every one. The savages did not even make a show of fight, brave though they were when hunting terrified women, or when firing from safe cover at a single man. Ironed, they were put in the ship's jail, to wait their trial in Hawonga.

By dawn next day Dinah and I were back at Port Hervey, in the little cottage where the bougainvillæas grew. And that afternoon a fleet of launches, boats, and canoes left the jetty for a certain low green island far out in the lagoon, where there are many white crosses, and a few tall stones, and where the weeping ironwood, Oceania's graveyard tree, sobs all day in the flowing Pacific wind. And before the boats went one boat in black.

So rest, noble heart, who deserved a better love than that you asked of me.

. . . . . .

They told me that the *Queen of the Islands* was away. No harm had come to England. No one could have proved that he knew he was leading to the altar a girl already married; no one, for the sake of the dead, wished to bring against him the charge of assault that could very well have been sustained. They said, in the islands, that "Harry always escaped. . . ." He had certainly done so this time.

When I met him again I was near six months older, and it was in Sydney, where Dinah and I were staying. I had had a nervous breakdown — no matter for surprise after all that had happened — and the doctors had ordered me south for a change. So I made the acquaintance of the siren city of the

Pacific, Sydney, whom to know is to love forever. She healed my sorrows and restored my youth as nothing else would have done.

Dinah and I were down at the Heads, far from the city, one clear morning of autumn — the gentle autumn of Australasia, that speaks in nothing of death or of regret, whose suns are gold, whose seas lie purple to the tempered light of noon, and whose winds come laden with the soft coolness that is life.

She had taken her knitting, and was sitting some way off, working alone. I, on the edge of the cliffs, was looking out to sea — to the "open sea," my country — and thinking, as I thought always, of my man who loved the sea. However long he might be in coming, I knew that he would come. . . .

And when I looked round, with eyes dazzled by the light on the far waters, I saw his face.

"I'm not a dream," was what he said. I suppose I must have looked as though I saw a vision, or a ghost. . . .

Do you care to hear all that I heard? How Maiera, in love with my young lover, and Lalua, following out her promise to give me to Harry England, if he would swear never to kill Luke Ivory, had between them forged, poisoned, and carried through their designs at a cost that angered England deeply, when he knew it — ready though he had been for any ordinary stratagem that might bring him what he wanted.

How England had planned to carry me away, indeed, by means of a marriage not doubtfully illegal, because it was the only means of separating me from Luke — but how he had meant to give me, in Rorona, the place of an honored sister only until Luke should set me free. . . .

"And if you doubted that, my girl," he said, "I thought the room I made for you would prove it."

"Lily's room?" I asked him.

"Yes," he answered. "Just that — Lily's room."

. . . . . .

"You don't ask anything?" he said later on, "about that precious crystal mine of yours. And yet, you know, I shall own it — next week."

"I don't need to," I answered him. "A girl knows whether a man wants her or her money."

"It was your money, once," he said coolly. "Ivory was right, in some things. I did plan the whole thing out when you were a child. You have got to know that."

"I understand," was all I said. I had pictured explanations — protestations — I don't know what. They were never wanted.

. . . . . .

Of what the money did I have no space to tell; another volume would scarce hold that story. "I shall make you a Queen indeed," he said to me, "my Queen of the Islands. . . ." They call us the President and his wife in the South American Republic that has been making so much history of late — but there will be no other King in Estacada so long as Harry England is alive — Harry, descendant of Prince Hal, who hunted the red deer afoot in England, long ago.

Lorraine has left the world; an Australian Sisterhood is her home. She was one not made for fortune in her love.

Dinah is the luck of the biggest undertaker in Sydney, whom she married last year.

And I? I have had my wish. I did not ask for happiness as well. Whether Fate has added that gift to my life or not is for no one but myself to know.

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